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Security Council

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Tuesday, 20 March 2007, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Kumalo	(South Africa)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Belle
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Nana Effah-Apenteng
	Indonesia	Mr. Jenie
	Italy	Mr. D'Alema
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Peru	Mr. Voto-Bernales
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia	Mr. Matulay
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott Sanders

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2007/152)

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07-27564 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2007/152)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Afghanistan, Belarus, Canada, Germany, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Norway and Pakistan, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend invitations under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Tom Koenigs, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, and Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and Director-General of the United Nations Office in Vienna.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Koenigs to take a seat at the Council table.

I invite Mr. Costa to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2007/152, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

At this meeting the Security Council will hear briefings by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and by the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

I now give the floor to Mr. Tom Koenigs, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

Mr. Koenigs: With the incoming Afghan new year, Afghanistan remains a place of hope and challenge. Unprecedented efforts to improve governance, help development and register military gains are being put to the test. While the conflict continues in the south, with border areas in the east and south-east vulnerable to incursions and violence, the need for strategic coordination of military, political and development efforts is stronger than ever. The threat to peace has not diminished, but the joint response by Afghan institutions, by the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), by donors and by the Afghan people themselves is encouraging.

Coordination efforts are moving forward, but they can be improved further. I would like to thank the Security Council for reinforcing the current consensus on the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) as the principal framework guiding the Government of Afghanistan and the international community in the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact. It is crucial at this moment to ensure that the Afghanistan National Development Strategy works well and delivers. At the last JCMB meeting in Berlin, which included the participation of political directors from capitals, donors underscored their support for the Government's goal of exerting greater ownership over security, reconstruction and development activities. Afghan ministries are currently drafting their five-year strategies, and subnational consultations are about to begin, in May. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has reaffirmed its commitment to implement effective coordination of the

international community and with the Government of Afghanistan at the provincial and national levels.

I count on the support of the Council to make the Afghanistan National Development Strategy work. It will deliver results only if everyone contributes to the process. To be candid, international participation needs to improve. I would therefore like to request, through the Council, that all donors ensure meaningful participation by their Government representatives in the National Development Strategy working and consultative groups, starting right now, in the run-up to the Afghanistan Development Forum, to be held on 30 April, and the fifth JCMB meeting, to be held on 1 May. For some donors and some key sectors that must entail reinforced staffing and resources on the ground in Kabul and in Afghanistan's provinces.

For the Afghan Government to fulfil its role under the Compact, the National Assembly needs to become more engaged in the Compact implementation process by including relevant discussions in its plenary agenda. Increased involvement will enable the National Assembly to analyse the Government's reporting on the use of donor assistance and to advance its legislative function.

Many other wings of the Government, including the Ministry of the Interior, will need to take more seriously their responsibility under the Compact. The continued passivity of many Government agencies — in the expectation that the international community will come to their rescue to meet the Compact objectives — only serves to delay progress, and in some cases even to undermine it.

For the process to succeed it is critical that the Government starts to view political advice by members of the international community as a genuine attempt to assist rather than as an attempt to control. It is of fundamental importance that the Government takes seriously the issue of top-down reform of key ministries, particularly the Ministry of the Interior. If it does not, the bottom-up attempts of the international community — for instance, to reform the police — will be an opportunity lost.

Improved utilization of development aid and accelerated budget execution, together with a strengthened international military presence and reinforced Afghanistan security forces, remain key prerequisites for the success of both development and military efforts during 2007.

As we speak, ISAF, together with Afghan national security forces, is engaged in large-scale operations against Taliban forces. The main theatre of operation is in the Sangin and Kajaki districts, in Helmand, although areas of Uruzgan, Kandahar, Farah and Ghor are also affected. Operation Achilles, which was launched on 6 March, and the subsequent offensive Operation Nowruz — which translates as "new year", which begins tomorrow — aim to defeat a tough enemy in unforgiving terrain. Past experience indicates that we can expect intensified violence as the weather gets warmer and spring begins.

But the ability of Taliban forces to acquire and retain the military initiative is now under active challenge in many districts. Its symbiotic relationship with drug-trafficking networks in Helmand and other southern provinces has been exposed as never before. Moreover, the Taliban model of governance remains broadly unpopular. Given the nature of this contest, I welcome the commitment of new forces to ISAF, which will generate a credible theatre reserve for the first time. Those include an additional 3,500 soldiers from the United States, 1,400 from the United Kingdom, 1,000 from Poland, 400 from Bulgaria and 300 from Hungary.

As military action increases, the protection of civilians has emerged as a burning concern. Taliban-led terrorist and insurgent groups bear sole responsibility for the high toll of deaths and injuries caused by suicide bombings. Despite some successes by Afghan security forces in detecting and dismantling suicide attack facilitation networks, there have been 27 suicide attacks so far this year — a figure that exceeds by far the rate in the same period of last year. Over 80 per cent of the victims of those attacks are civilian bystanders.

There have been a number of cases of civilian casualties caused by Government and international military forces during the reporting period. On 4 March in Nangahar province, 12 civilians were killed and 38 injured in the aftermath of a vehicle-borne suicide improvised explosive device attack on a United States Marine Corps convoy. That incident prompted demonstrations against the foreign military forces. In Kapisa, an ISAF air strike on a residential compound killed nine persons, including four children. The compound was targeted after two men were seen firing their weapons at a nearby Afghan National Army base, according to a United States military spokesperson.

Those incidents expose the grave risks posed by civilian losses in military action. Beyond the tragic loss of innocent human life, the resulting disaffection and civil unrest, loss of public support, as well as victims' right to justice place the international effort to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan under additional stress.

In line with its human rights mandate, UNAMA has sought to position itself as an impartial and credible advocate on behalf of civilians by conducting objective verifications of those incidents and sharing the information with key actors. Our primary aim is to prevent further civilian casualties caused by any party to the conflict, even if our greatest concern remains the flagrant disregard of insurgent groups for civilian lives. Afghan Government and international military forces, too, must take greater care to ensure that they are seeking to do no harm to civilians and are so perceived. Afghan villages and communities must be able to count on their Government and ISAF for protection from violence in all its forms.

As a complement to military action, there is considerable potential for improved security through political outreach to disaffected tribal groups and commanders with a "soft" commitment to the Taliban and other insurgent groups. There are signs that more groups than ever are receptive to Afghan Government overtures when they are credibly made.

While insurgency-affected areas are concentrated along the Afghan-Pakistani border, with suicide attackers, facilitators and Taliban commanders continuing to cross over from Pakistan, the insurgency has a distinct local profile from district to district and is equally susceptible to local solutions. It is critical in that regard for the Afghan Government to recognize that alienation along tribal lines has resulted in many cases from past actions of Government officials. Strategies to overcome that disaffection are urgently required.

Local solutions to improve security through outreach to local communities have proven successful in Paktya, Khost, Kandahar and Kunar provinces, often with UNAMA support. On the other hand, a considerable number of provincial governors and other key officials continue to underperform in that respect; support to the provinces from the central Government is sometimes insufficient. The current situation in Helmand province illustrates that. The Afghan Government has so far failed to project its authority into such districts as Nauzad, Sangin, Kajaki and Baghran even when community leaders have demonstrated courage in defying the Taliban. A credible strategy is needed to enlist the support of tribal leaders and their communities for Government initiatives to keep the peace, restore basic services and meet urgent humanitarian needs. A successful counter-narcotics policy in Helmand, Uruzgan and elsewhere will depend on the re-establishment of governance and strong community engagement.

As the Secretary-General's report before the Council in document S/2007/152 makes clear, UNAMA is eager to strengthen its efforts to deliver effective coordination, meet humanitarian needs and promote regional cooperation in economic, social, development and other spheres. Our constructive role in outreach to vulnerable communities to develop local solutions for governance and insecurity can be of enormous value and deserves reinforcement. Our work must be an effective complement to Government and military action. The new UNAMA provincial offices are meant to open doors and initiate dialogue with a wide variety of groups whose role will be critical in ending the conflict. The Policy Action Group led by President Karzai must be made increasingly operational at the provincial level to guide and support the concerned provincial governors and enable further outreach to the districts.

There is a strategic consensus on the need to disrupt Taliban leadership networks as a key aspect of the multifaceted effort to defeat the insurgency. The capacity of national law enforcement authorities to locate and arrest Taliban leaders needs to be strengthened in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. The continuing impunity of terrorist networks based in Waziristan but operating in Afghanistan remains of high concern, as does information about Taliban leadership presence and training activities in and around Quetta, Peshawar and Miram Shah. I welcome as a very positive step the recent arrest in Quetta of Mullah Obaidullah Akhund, one of Mullah Omar's two deputies and former Taliban Minister of Defence — a key figure featuring on the sanctions list established under Security Council resolution 1267 (1999).

Regional cooperation remains essential to resolving the insurgency. Existing practical initiatives to increase regional trust and dialogue between Afghanistan and Pakistan, notably in infrastructure, health and private sector development, have to be further developed as confidence-building measures.

On 10 March, the Wolesi Jirga approved a revised reconciliation and general amnesty bill that grants amnesty to all political and belligerent groups involved in the armed conflict before the establishment of the Interim Administration in 2001, as well as to those individuals and groups still in armed opposition to the Government who join the national reconciliation process. Since the right of individuals to seek justice with respect to individual crimes is explicitly not affected, that, like any initiative to integrate groups willing to live in peace under the new Constitution, is welcome.

Nevertheless, the principal framework for action in that area remains the Action Plan on Peace, Justice and Reconciliation launched by the President on 10 December 2006. The key elements of the Action Plan include, among other things, establishing the truth about atrocities committed between April 1978 and the fall of the Taliban in 2001, measures to honour victims, reform of State institutions — including vetting and reconciliation initiatives — and providing recommendations on an appropriate accountability mechanism. The key objectives of the Plan, which remains a benchmark under the Afghanistan Compact, have to be protected, and United Nations principles with regard to the inadmissibility of amnesties for crimes against humanity, war crimes and other egregious human rights violations have to be respected. The debate on those issues in Afghanistan is likely to remain vigorous and at times divisive. It will be vital to lay continuing stress on concrete measures to recognize and honour victims and support reconciliation.

Counter-narcotics efforts continue to be an area of utmost strategic priority. The implementation of the National Drug Control Strategy requires concerted action by the international community and the Afghan Government to prevent a possible failure of counter-narcotics policy. Initial reports of this year's opium poppy planting indicate that there will be a record harvest in 2007. Eradication is ongoing, but it has not had a critical impact on opium poppy cultivation in the southern provinces. A significant decrease is expected in the north where initiatives to promote licit livelihoods have succeeded and governance and law enforcement have been strengthened. Eradication activities must be accompanied by both effective alternative livelihood programmes and enforcement measures against drug networks, to break the nexus of drug trafficking, insurgency, violence and corruption.

Widespread corruption within the justice sector is a major concern. To tackle that problem, the reform process urgently needs to address the issue of the low-level salaries of judges and prosecutors and the other recurrent expenditures in the justice system. The Afghan budget will not be able to cover those expenses in the foreseeable future. There is a strong case for the establishment of some form of multidonor funding mechanism within the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund to meet these and other costs. The justice institutions will need to further restructure and reform their organizations for greater accountability, improved service delivery and work conditions and better resources and security for justice officials.

In March, the Supreme Court, the Office of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Justice each presented comprehensive new reform strategies as part of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy process. Now is the time to seek funding for a concrete implementable national programme for justice institutions.

Finally, I would like to raise one UNAMA-related internal issue. The continued lack of a secure environment severely limits the ability of the mission to implement its mandate and exposes its staff — in particular, those in the field — to considerable risk. While UNAMA has been making strenuous efforts to protect its staff, it is facing serious operational constraints. Against that background, recruiting and retaining qualified staff represents a major challenge, especially in the field offices. In view of the importance of UNAMA's role at this critical juncture in the Afghan peace process and especially in view of the increasing need for UNAMA's outreach, that issue must also be addressed in terms of financial resources. Your support in that regard will be critical.

I wish to thank the Council and the international community for their contir..ing commitment to the peace process in Afghanistan and to the mission of UNAMA. We will continue to endeavour to ensure that coordination in all fields, political outreach and regional cooperation continue to improve in the areas we have identified as critical to the success of the transition.

The President: I thank Mr. Koenigs for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Mr. Costa: It is an honour to address again this session of the Council. Since I was last invited to brief the Council in October 2006, members have had the chance to see directly the debilitating effects that drugs and crime have had on Afghanistan.

Today, I would like to brief the Council on the latest opium crop survey carried out by my Office. Copies of the survey in my hand have been distributed. First — the opium situation: at present, it is easy to be pessimistic about the situation in Afghanistan, especially regarding opium. But our winter assessment shows a new and possibly encouraging phenomenon: divergent cultivation trends between the centre-north and the centre-south of the country, as was just noted by Special Representative Koenigs.

In the centre-north of Afghanistan security and development are slowly taking hold. We know from experience that stability and assistance help farmers turn their back on drug cultivation. That has happened in the Andean region and in South-East Asia. It is now happening in parts of Afghanistan, where a balanced system of retribution and rewards is creating an opium-free belt across the middle of the country, from the borders with Pakistan in the south-east to the border of Turkmenistan in the north-west.

I am happy about the establishment of a Good Performance Fund to benefit provincial administrations that eradicate poppy. Rewarding compliance with the law is our best chance of doubling the number of opium-free provinces from 6 in 2006, mostly around Kabul, to about 12 provinces by the end of the current harvest cycle. If that happens, it would mean that a third of the country would be practically without any opium cultivation by summer 2007.

In the south of the country the story is different. There, the vicious circle of drugs funding terrorism and terrorism funding the drug trade is stronger than ever. The resulting ever-increasing opium cultivation in the five provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan, Zabul and Nimroz is an issue of insurgency as much as a drug problem. It is therefore vital to fight them both together, at the same time, with the same weapons. During my recent visit to Kabul, I was glad to learn from both military and counter-narcotic officials that they appreciate that argument and are developing complementary rules of engagement.

In Afghanistan, the drug problem occurs in a security vacuum — that is known by all — where illicit crops coexist with other criminal activities that support such cultivation. Foremost among those activities is the importation of precursor chemicals needed to produce heroin and the exportation of the illicit proceeds derived from the opium cultivation. The relevant numbers are big — so big that their lack of detection is a revealing story in itself.

Think about the following: first, last year alone, more than 1,000 tons of acetic anhydride were smuggled into Afghanistan, together with five times as many tons of other chemical derivatives needed for drug refining in a country without any chemical industry. Secondly, more than $3 billion of illicit drug money was moved in the opposite direction, into havens where it was laundered and put beyond reproach. Therefore, border management needs to be improved in the region.

At the moment, the Government of Afghanistan is in no position to control its territory, let alone its borders. Its neighbours and all those with a stake in stopping the flow of drugs, chemical precursors and money must help. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has recently proposed a major initiative to assist Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan to improve border management and anti-narcotic intelligence cooperation. The initiative includes physical infrastructures, border posts, trenches and containment walls, together with border security encampments.

Operational measures will also be improved, with joint interception exercises, intelligence-led investigations, common border liaison offices and compatible communication systems. Controls at the sea borders of Iran and Pakistan need to be reinforced, together with better border checks at freight crossings into Afghanistan. Attention must be devoted to container security and to the interception of cargos that are mislabelled to hide chemical precursors.

Thirdly, I salute the efforts to bring major drug traffickers to justice. The Council's mission reports refer to a culture of impunity in Afghanistan. I therefore applaud the Council's decision in resolution 1735 (2006) of 22 December 2006 to add major drug traffickers to the consolidated list of individuals and entities supporting Al-Qaida and the Taliban. In general, the challenge is to strengthen Afghanistan's criminal justice system and prosecute people who are profiting from drugs and crime. In particular, resolution 1735 (2006) will make it easier to interdict

the incipient Afghan drug cartels, prevent their operatives from travelling abroad, confiscate their assets and facilitate their arrest and extradition.

Fourthly and finally, I must mention the cancer of corruption. The report correctly recognizes bribery, dishonesty and corruption as major threats to Afghanistan. These crimes undermine the rule of law. They are especially ominous as they lubricate the drug machinery and provide the context for criminal activity. They facilitate the evolution of the narco-economy into a tolerated form of enrichment. They help illicit revenues sink their buying power into legal economic activity, government structures and provincial administrations.

Afghanistan has recently ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption. As custodian of this Convention, my Office attaches particular importance to the fact that Afghanistan is a State party to the Convention and intends to assist Afghanistan to comply with the resulting international obligations. In doing so, it counts on generous funding from Canada. The general goal is to strengthen the country's legal and administrative capability, educate a new generation of young and honest civil servants, enforce corruption prevention through financial disclosures and competitive tender processes, and promote anticorruption investigations, prosecution and the recovery of illicit proceeds.

With regard to the Afghan opium situation in the spring of 2007, I stress four points: first, the new, potentially positive cultivation trends; secondly, the urgent need to strengthen border control; thirdly, the importance of the Council's decision to list the major drug traffickers; and fourthly, the priority of promoting honest governance. I hope the Council will judge these developments as helpful in freeing Afghanistan from the tragedy of drugs, crime and violence.

The President: I thank Mr. Costa for his briefing. Before opening the floor, I wish to request all participants to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to work efficiently within its timetable. I thank participants for their understanding and cooperation.

I now give the floor to the representative of Italy. On behalf of the Security Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Massimo D'Alema, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy.

Mr. D'Alema (Italy): First of all, allow me to say that I am extremely honoured to have the opportunity to address such an authoritative body today for my very first time.

I would like to thank the Special Representative for Afghanistan, Tom Koenigs, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Antonio Maria Costa, for their comprehensive briefings.

I express my deepest appreciation for the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan. It is a very appropriate and timely reminder of the vital importance for the international community as a whole of attaining full success in Afghanistan.

The report mentions the progress achieved in several key areas. It recalls, in particular, the ongoing reforms of the Ministry of the Interior, the development of parliamentary institutions as an independent and active counterweight to the Executive, the meaningful progress made in the field of transitional justice.

These are significant achievements. Italy is proud to have contributed to them, especially through its leading role in the field of the rule of law and the justice system.

And yet, this is not the time for complacency. The findings contained in the report sound a worrisome, but healthy, wake-up call. We have to recognize that progress is insufficient in too many sectors, not only in security but also in governance, socio-economic development, regional cooperation, human rights protection, and counter-narcotics. In some of these sectors, to be absolutely frank, we are even facing some setbacks.

What does that mean? It means that we can and we must do more. We must succeed not only for the sake of the credibility of the international institutions involved in Afghanistan. But first and foremost we must succeed for the Afghan people.

The draft resolution aims at emphasizing the crucial role of the civilian component of the United Nations mission. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) must be given all the political support and the resources needed to fulfil its complex mandate. I firmly believe that UNAMA should also have a stronger role in humanitarian

coordination and in human rights monitoring functions. The draft resolution addresses this point in a satisfactory way.

We are all aware that the adoption of a new resolution is not enough. Promoting and strengthening Afghan ownership is an essential prerequisite for success. President Karzai himself underlined that point during his recent visit to Rome. Today, I would like to express to him and to the Afghan institutions all the gratitude of the Italian Government for the help offered in the freeing of Italian journalist Daniele Mastrogiacomo.

In order to create better conditions for Afghan ownership, Italy is organizing, together with the Afghan Government and in close cooperation with the United Nations, the Rome conference on the rule of law. Justice and the rule of law are crucial conditions for democratic development and internal security in Afghanistan. Much has been done, but serious problems remain, including widespread corruption. We do need additional effort and we need better coordination through the approval of an action plan in this strategic sector. A new trust fund will also be needed to ensure a coherent approach to the whole sector.

Italy also wants to pay special attention to the linkages between the rule-of-law sector, counter-narcotics and police reform. We welcome the coming European security and defence policy mission in the field of policing, with linkages to the wider rule of law. Italy is fully committed to the success of a mission which constitutes an encouraging sign of a growing assumption of responsibilities by the European Union. We aim at a growing role for the European Union in the rule-of-law and justice sector. In this context, we fully support the statement that will be delivered by the German presidency of the European Union.

Security provided by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), in cooperation with the Afghan army, is an essential precondition for stabilization — but it cannot be sufficient. I underline this point as the representative of a Government that has committed a large number of troops in the country. Peace and stability will be on shaky ground unless there is swift and solid progress in people's living conditions, civilian reconstruction and institution-building at the national and provincial levels.

There is an absolute need to reduce support for the insurgency. As the Secretary-General's report (S/2007/152) states, we should encourage the Action Plan on Peace, Justice and Reconciliation, launched by President Karzai. My view is that such encouragement will be effective only within the regional dimension. We should therefore consider a process allowing the full and positive involvement of the neighbouring countries. We should be open to the possibility of an international conference, which I conceive as the result of this process. Let me clarify this.

The draft resolution already stresses the importance of a stronger role for UNAMA in supporting regional cooperation. I would like to stress this point — the regional dimension must be reinforced if we wish to succeed. We must — and we can — be ambitious. Italy welcomes the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Group of Eight plus Afghanistan and Pakistan on 30 May as an important step in the right direction.

As a follow-up, we believe that an international conference, in Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) format, is needed in order to deal in a comprehensive way with regional issues relating to peace and stability in Afghanistan. Our proposal has been conceived within the framework of the Afghanistan Compact as part of a process that started with the Bonn and London Conferences. According to the JCMB format, the conference on regional peace and stability should be co-sponsored by the Government of Afghanistan and the United Nations.

The objectives of the conference should be very concrete, and they should be threefold. First, the conference should state, at a high political level, the commitment of the main stakeholders to contribute to the regional dimension of the security and stability of Afghanistan. I think that that is of absolutely key importance for peace. Secondly, it should agree on the need to put in place a series of confidence-building and cooperation measures between Afghanistan and its neighbours. Thirdly, it should support the national reconciliation process, as launched by President Karzai, through a regional stabilization process involving neighbouring countries and the international community. Finally, such an international conference would also be a consensus-building measure. It would allow trust and support to be built up among the public of our countries with regard to the prospects for peace and democracy in Afghanistan.

UNAMA's role will be crucial in reinforcing Afghan institutions. Equally important will be the

continuous commitment of each of us in the areas of security, peace and civil reconstruction. Italy hopes that, once implemented, the measures foreseen in the draft resolution will help us to contribute to achieving the goal of a better Afghanistan — an Afghanistan which is safe, prosperous and free. We owe that to the international community. Above all, we owe it to the Afghan people, who deserve our support more than ever. Let us try to live up to their expectations.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): I am grateful to Special Representative Koenigs and to Executive Director Costa for their briefings, and to the Secretary-General for his detailed and comprehensive report (S/2007/152). I align myself with the statement to be made later by Ambassador Matussek on behalf of the European Union.

Let me at the outset commend the excellent work being done by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in Kabul and in the provinces, often in very difficult circumstances. That work is central to everything that we are seeking to achieve in Afghanistan, and UNAMA is the sum of the men and women who work for that Mission.

The past year has been a challenging one. We faced a major threat from the Taliban, whose attempts to take Kandahar were defeated thanks to the efforts of the Afghan and ISAF forces involved. In southern and eastern Afghanistan, we still face a vicious and capable insurgency. But by using intelligence and targeted military operations, the ISAF and Afghan security forces are already taking the initiative.

Military action is necessary — indeed, it is an essential pillar — but there are other key areas which must be advanced at the same time. That requires a comprehensive approach, linking and coordinating security, the development of political institutions, economic progress and counter-narcotics activities. This means ensuring cooperation among the members of the international community and coordination between international and Afghan efforts, as well as better information to explain to Afghans what is being done.

UNAMA and the Special Representative are uniquely placed to play a leading role in this regard, in particular as co-Chairs of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB). The Berlin JCMB reaffirmed that this is, and will continue to be, the primary mechanism for the coordination of international and Afghan efforts to implement the Compact commitments. It is incumbent upon all involved in the JCMB process, including NATO, to ensure that it delivers against that objective, particularly through more active engagement in the working groups looking at the detailed sectoral issues.

UNAMA's presence in the provinces is also a huge asset, enabling them to coordinate with international and Afghan stakeholders outside Kabul. We strongly support the proposal to increase the number of UNAMA's provincial offices from 7 to 11. But we also have to recognize the constraints of security and — as the special Representative said — to address the real problems that confront staff in the regions.

Tackling the challenges facing Afghanistan, including the insurgency, is a long-term project. The threat from drugs, which ranks alongside the threat from the Taliban, is no exception. As we have heard, the recent winter assessment survey by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime suggests that Afghanistan may be facing another year of high poppy cultivation, and that has to be very worrying. But the survey also appears to show that, like last year, there continue to be cultivation reductions in those areas where there is better security, governance and development. So we need increased and sustained assistance for Afghan efforts to tackle opium production and trafficking, including through donations to the Counter Narcotics Trust Fund, which supports the efforts of the Afghan Government to deliver its own counter-narcotics strategy.

As the Secretary-General's report makes clear, regional cooperation across a range of issues is vital for the stability of Afghanistan and for the stability of the region as a whole. This applies to the counter-narcotics and counter-insurgency efforts, but it also applies to economic issues. I have already referred to the need for a comprehensive approach. Increasing prosperity through regional cooperation is part of that picture. So we look forward to the next regional economic cooperation conference, to be held in Islamabad later this year.

Just as the challenges facing Afghanistan are long-term, so the international community's commitment to Afghanistan must be long-term. The United Kingdom has made that commitment; so has the United Nations. We look forward to continuing to work closely with UNAMA for the common objectives set out.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): I, too, wish at the outset to thank Mr. Koenigs and Mr. Costa for the useful information that they have just given us. I broadly share their assessment of the situation. I should also like to welcome the presence of Mr. D'Alema, who highlighted Italy's efforts to promote the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We listened to him with interest.

The Permanent Representative of Germany will shortly make a statement with which I fully associate myself. For my part, I should like to emphasize the following elements.

The Special Representative painted a picture of contrasts. The security situation remains worrisome, and the risks of increasing violence continue to be significant. At the same time, the progress made since the launching of the Bonn process should not be underestimated: the central institutions are functioning; administration is strengthening in a number of provinces; and the economy is growing and State tax revenues are growing along with it. Only the building of Afghan capacities — which will definitely take time — will make it possible to ensure the development and stability of the country.

In order to improve security, there must be continued efforts to train, drill and provide equipment in order to make the Afghan security forces, both civilian and military, fully operational. But the solution to the many difficult challenges facing Afghanistan cannot be exclusively military. The Afghan authorities, like the international community, must remain fully engaged to make progress in the following areas: swiftly improving the living conditions of Afghans, particularly outside Kabul; building Afghan capacities, which requires more determined action against corruption, the drug trafficking and illegal militias; fighting drug production and trafficking, which jeopardize security and development; and strengthening coordination among the members of the international community within the framework of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is intended to play a major role in all of those areas, because the United Nations is regarded as a central and impartial actor. It alone has both the legitimacy and the expertise needed to coordinate reconstruction efforts and to support the consolidation of the democratic transition process by supporting the actions of the Afghan authorities.

UNAMA must be given the means to fully carry out this mission. That is why we support the Secretary-General's recommendation that its mandate be extended for one year, as well as the priorities that he suggests for that mandate: strengthening the coordination of assistance at the local level, particularly humanitarian assistance; stepping up the good offices mission in matters of regional cooperation; and promoting human rights and the protection of civilians.

In that connection, we invite the Special Representative to continue to promote the implementation of the Action Plan on Peace, Justice and Reconciliation, particularly those aspects involving transitional justice and the fight against impunity. That is an important commitment undertaken by the Afghan Government within the framework of the Afghanistan Compact.

Furthermore, we believe it is essential that UNAMA devote greater attention to the impact of fighting on civilian populations and to freedom of speech in the media. In order to accomplish that, it is important that UNAMA continues to expand its geographical presence by opening new provincial offices where security conditions allow. Beyond that, the stakes are so high that it is more necessary than ever to implement a truly integrated strategy that brings together Afghanistan with all the countries interested in its stabilization — for example, by establishing a contact group.

In that context, I wish, finally, to emphasize the importance of regional cooperation and the support that the international community can lend to such cooperation. Pakistan and Afghanistan in particular must be encouraged to improve control over their common border and to develop cooperation and exchange among them.

Mr. Belle (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to thank Mr. Koenigs, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his report and the very important information that he gave us. I also thank Mr. Costa of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Their briefings were very informative and very, very clear. In addition, I thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2007/152), which shed light on not only the progress made in Afghanistan, but also the remaining obstacles to be overcome. I welcome the presence at this meeting of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy.

My delegation fully subscribes to the statement to be made later at this meeting by Ambassador Matussek, Permanent Representative of Germany, on behalf of the European Union.

Afghanistan and its partners once again find themselves at a critical juncture in the country's transition. In order to make Afghanistan a stable and prosperous country, a comprehensive approach is absolutely essential, as other delegations have emphasized. The security component is indispensable, but it is not enough; it must be accompanied by progress in economic and social development, promoting the rule of law and good governance.

Here, I should like to stress the need for intensive cooperation among all actors on the ground. Those actors are the Afghan Government, the United Nations, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the European Union. That cooperation will be the key to the success of such a comprehensive approach, and it is within that comprehensive approach that Belgium's activities are found. Belgium is contributing to the efforts of the international community. We have participated in ISAF since 2003, having contributed 300 personnel, and are also helping to finance development programmes.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2007/152) quite rightly emphasizes that moving regional cooperation forward remains a strategic priority for Afghanistan. In their briefings, Mr. Koenigs and Mr. Costa referred to the importance of regional cooperation. We support the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to support and strengthen regional cooperation at the political and economic levels. In that regard, close cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours, particularly Pakistan, is essential. Belgium therefore encourages all parties to further intensify their collaboration, as much in the area of security as in terms of development, trade and the economy.

The briefings of Mr. Costa and Mr. Koenigs both confirmed that the drug problem continues to pose a serious threat to Afghanistan's development. Forecasts for 2007 are hardly encouraging and should cause us to continue our efforts to eradicate that scourge.

However, not everything is negative; indeed, Mr. Costa referred in his briefing to certain positive developments. The study to which he referred, carried out by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, indicates that there could be a drop in production in those provinces where the security situation has made it possible to implement alternative livelihood projects. My delegation views this as encouraging, assuming that this trend takes hold.

Good governance, the rule of law and the human rights situation, as well as reform of the Ministry of the Interior and efforts to combat corruption and drugs, all are urgent priorities. By effectively addressing them, the Afghan Government will further contribute to promoting the Afghan people's confidence in the country's institutions. The benchmarks of the Afghanistan Compact represent the best means of doing so.

Belgium attaches great importance to the crucial role played by the United Nations and in particular by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). It welcomes the fact that the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board was recently reaffirmed in its role as the primary mechanism for facilitating coordination between the Afghan Government and the international community.

The opening of new UNAMA offices in the provinces and the deployment of military liaison officers are also welcome developments. In that context, Belgium fully supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General to renew UNAMA's mandate once again for a one-year period.

In conclusion, on the occasion of the Afghan New Year — Nowruz — to which Mr. Koenig referred, I wish to express the hope that Afghanistan, in the year 1386 of its calendar, will keep to the course charted in Bonn and in London. The Afghan people truly deserve this.

Mr. Matulay (Slovakia): I, too, would like to thank Mr. Koenigs and Mr. Costa for their briefings today and for having painted a fresh and updated picture of the current situation in Afghanistan. Allow me also to join previous speakers in welcoming the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, Mr. D'Alema.

Slovakia fully associates itself with the statement to be delivered later by the Permanent Representative of Germany on behalf of the European Union. I will therefore limit my statement to some specific comments.

The implementation of the Afghanistan Compact, as a result of the London Conference, is firmly under

way, despite very difficult circumstances and insurgent activities, mainly in the southern provinces. There are many positive signs of social renewal such as the ongoing reconstruction and the building of infrastructure. New projects are under way involving small businesses for women; electric plants; health-care services; and programmes to combat illiteracy.

There is also abundant evidence that Afghans are living in conditions of greater insecurity than they were two years ago and that the insurgency and counter-insurgency campaigns are spawning ever-greater violence.

Security sector reform, justice reform and efforts in the areas of counter-narcotics, impunity and gender rights are significantly lagging behind the expectations of the international community, and more has to be done to improve the overall situation.

Substantial challenges remain to be addressed, in particular comprehensive security sector reform. The Afghan National Army operates under very difficult conditions and is at only half of its planned strength. The Afghan National Police still lacks qualified and motivated manpower in its lower ranks. Given the current levels of internal conflicts, insecurity and criminality, the Afghan National Police also lacks the structures necessary to provide basic public security. The international community, led by Germany, should intensify its support to make it possible for Afghanistan to reach the target of a professional, trained police force by 2010. The question remains whether that will be enough to respond to the growing Taliban attacks, fuelled by the drug trade.

Significant problems are being caused by the widespread corruption, particularly within the police and the judiciary. That undermines development by distorting the rule of law and weakening the country's institutional foundation, and it undermines the trust of the Afghan people in Government institutions. The present culture of impunity for certain commanders and warlords is also contributing to instability. The Afghan Government should make strong efforts in these fields, as the country's successful transition to democracy is not guaranteed.

Public expectations are not being met or even addressed. The Afghan people expect effective, accountable and transparent governance, and they will not support a Government that does not create the conditions necessary to establish security, promote the rule of law, protect human rights and encourage economic development.

Little progress is being made towards the realization of gender equality. There is a clear decrease in the ability of Afghan women and girls fully to enjoy their rights. Continued attacks against educational institutions are having a negative impact on the enrolment of girls, and women's participation in State institutions remains low. Parliamentary deliberations on the abolition of several ministries pose a continual threat to the future existence of the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

The Afghan Government continues to face enormous challenges in the delivery of economic and social services. The picture that has been painted shows chronic food insecurity, an inability to access sufficient water and a lack of health-care services, educational facilities and economic opportunities for Afghans. In contrast, the flourishing drug industry accounts for probably one half of the total gross domestic product.

The overall approach taken by the Afghan Administration, together with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the international donor community, should stress the close interrelationship among security, recovery and local economic development. Provinces should be made directly responsible for their progress towards fulfilling the Afghan National Development Strategy, and rewards by the Good Performance Fund are steps in the right direction.

Afghanistan's neighbours have an important role to play. High-level regional engagement and cooperation are crucial to addressing terrorism, the narcotics trade and pressing refugee issues. Afghanistan's regional partners must step up their up efforts and take responsibility for the prevention of cross-border movement on the part of insurgents in order to fight the flourishing narcotics trade and to find solutions for Afghan refugees living within their borders.

In that context, I should like to note that new cooperation initiatives between Afghanistan and Pakistan have been announced, for which I would like to express our support, as they are promising steps towards closer regional partnership and in the combat against terrorism. The Afghanistan-Pakistan Tripartite Commission is a welcome example of regional cooperation.

However, the report underlines the fact that the Taliban continues to enjoy privileged sanctuary on the Pakistani side of the frontier, posing an imminent and ongoing threat to the State-building efforts of the Afghan administration and its citizens.

Despite the difficult situation in the country, Slovakia strongly supports Afghanistan's political and economic transition. We will continue to contribute to the transformation and stabilization processes by maintaining our peacekeepers in the country and providing in-kind assistance to the Afghan police and to its army.

Mr. **Suescum** (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we would like to thank Mr. Tom Koenigs, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, and Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, for the work they are doing in Afghanistan under such difficult circumstances. We also commend all of the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

The information provided to us by Mr. Tom Koenigs and Mr. Antonio Maria Costa in their reports is, in certain respects, more encouraging than in the past. We express our cautious optimism in that regard.

Nevertheless, the reduction in violence does not mean that the insurgency has been defeated. We have been told that the Taliban are preparing new, reinforced attacks against national and international security forces. We were pleased to hear the information about preparations for an offence against insurgents, which will no doubt begin when spring arrives. We are grateful to Governments that have sent or pledged reinforcements for the southern region of the country, where violence is more widespread. We also encourage other preparations in that regard. The reconstruction process in the south can begin in earnest only when there is peace and stability in the provinces there.

The most serious problem confronting the Government and people of Afghanistan is the violence generated by the insurgency carried out by the Taliban and other illegally armed groups. We support initiatives to stem the problem. Those initiatives must be strategic and forward-looking, and not aimed solely at rectifying the situation in the short term. The establishment of the Policy Action Group was an excellent initiative to address the crisis of violence.

Nevertheless, it is with certain reservations that we welcome some of the programmes being implemented by the Group — in particular the Afghan National Auxiliary Police. We are concerned about the capacity of a police force whose members receive only 10 days of training. Also of great importance is the screening process for Auxiliary Police recruits, which must be vigorous so as to ensure that the Government of Afghanistan does train local militias. Finally, we urge the Policy Action Group to incorporate the Auxiliary Police force into the regular Afghan police force as soon as possible.

In the course of the past year we have been able to witness the link between a record poppy crop and violence in the south of the country, where the largest fields are found. The new report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is of great concern to us. It indicates that the production of opium in Afghanistan in 2007 could grow by almost 60 per cent over that of the previous year. According to the report, the vicious circle involving the sale of drugs, the financing of insurgency and terrorism and support for drug trafficking is stronger than ever. Programmes to promote viable alternatives to the poppy should be strengthened and better funded and coordinated. At the same time, the products generated by those programmes should receive preferential access to markets, so as to establish a virtuous circle involving production, markets and sufficient capital to reinvest in production.

Foreign support for the Taliban is one of the major obstacles to the reconstruction process and to a stable Afghanistan, which should be the goal of everyone in the region, but especially of neighbouring countries. We welcome the meetings that have been held by the Tripartite Commission. Any improvement in assistance, cooperation and coordination of operations on the ground is a great step forward.

We urge the Government of Pakistan to redouble its efforts, in steadfast accordance with international law and human rights, to deny access to Pakistani territory to those who organize and carry out attacks against security forces in Afghanistan. In addition, we urge the Government of Afghanistan to take constructive steps with regard to its border dispute with Pakistan, as well as to resume dialogue with its neighbour in order to reach an agreement on borders. For its part, the international community should be more vigilant in ensuring that insurgent and

destabilizing forces do not have access to financing, weapons or other elements that feed violence.

The Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) is the primary mechanism for coordinating the efforts of the international community and Afghan institutions. That coordination is key to success and nourishes the spirit of the Afghanistan Compact. Nevertheless, we believe that the Compact, despite its sincere and laudable goals, has not set clear priorities. That has led to inefficient deployment of efforts and a far-from-optimal disbursement of funds. Lastly, we encourage the JCMB to establish a framework of priorities for the various goals and timelines of the Compact, so as to make it a more efficient tool and speed up the attainment of its goals. In addition, we are concerned about the perception that various Afghan State institutions, such as the National Assembly, have been marginalized in the process of planning and implementing some of the Compact's objectives. We believe that it is necessary for the JCMB to strengthen its ties with the various institutions, so as to promote a sense of ownership over the Compact.

Finally, we would like once again to express our gratitude for the considerable work done by UNAMA staff, and especially by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and his predecessors. When we debate the extension of UNAMA's mandate, the delegation of Panama will support extending it for 12 months. In the coming year, we would like to see greater efforts to combat overall corruption, so as to promote trust among the Afghan people in their institutions and to eliminate anything that might attract people to the insurgency. We would also like to see efforts redoubled to improve the condition of women and children, as well as the humanitarian situation overall. We will have to strengthen protection for UNAMA staff.

We support the appeal made to the international community today by Mr. Koenigs for an increased commitment to Afghanistan. All the good will in the world is not sufficient to pay professors, heat homes or train police. All those are elements of the daily lives of the Afghan people, who do not yet enjoy even a semblance of stability and normalcy. Continued financing by the international community is essential to achieving a stable and prosperous Afghanistan, enjoying good governance that protects human rights for all under the rule of law.

Nana Effah-Apenteng (Ghana): At the outset, I wish to express my delegation's appreciation of the statements made by Special Representative Tom Koenigs and by Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, whose assessment of the situation in Afghanistan we fully share.

The international community has a shared interest in the transformation of Afghanistan into a peaceful and stable democracy. Therefore, it is imperative that our approach to the current crisis be based on moral clarity and a steadfast commitment to the values of openness, tolerance and social inclusion. Hence, the brutal assassination of the head of the Kandahar Department of Women's Affairs in September 2006 and all other acts that are calculated to obstruct the progress of Afghanistan must be unreservedly condemned and wholly rejected for what they represent in today's world.

In launching the Action Plan on Peace, Justice and Reconciliation in December 2006, President Karzai took a brave step forward, and he deserves every encouragement and support if he is to implement the plan effectively.

While we strongly deplore the loss of innocent lives resulting from the ongoing violence, we heartily welcome the steady progress being made in laying the foundation for a modern, united and prosperous State that would be at peace with itself and with its neighbours. In that connection, we commend the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the International Security Assistance Force as well as the numerous non-governmental organizations that are extending invaluable support to the Government and people of Afghanistan.

At the same time, we do recognize that ultimately the people of Afghanistan must be the masters of their own destiny. That is why the gravity of the governance issues raised in the Secretary-General's report cannot be overstated. We urge the Afghan authorities and their international partners to endeavour to address them with the utmost sense of urgency. Only a strong central authority that enjoys the confidence of the population can reconcile the nation and effectively implement the objectives contained in the internationally-backed Afghanistan Compact and allied initiatives, such as the interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy and the National Drug Control Strategy.

It has long been obvious that failure to reign in the illegal trade in narcotics and arms and to suppress the terrorists and extremists who are bent on destabilizing Afghanistan shall impact negatively on global peace and security. It is thus heartening to learn about the brave initiatives undertaken by various local communities in some of the most volatile areas in the country to contain the insurgency and improve their circumstances. They deserve all the support they can get in seeking to fashion for themselves a safe and secure environment. Obviously, the people know very well that without security there can be no meaningful development, and vice versa. The challenge, therefore, is to prevent the current situation from evolving into an intractable vicious cycle that allows widespread impoverishment and deprivation among the population to feed into the insurgency.

Ghana further supports regional initiatives aimed at improving relations between Afghanistan and its neighbours within the framework of the 2002 Kabul Declaration and the New Delhi Declaration of November 2006. It is significant that the forthcoming Third Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan will be held in Pakistan, as the meeting will afford the two countries an opportunity to enhance their cooperation in combating the insurgency and, more importantly, to give a much-needed boost to security, governance and development cooperation throughout the region.

We have every confidence that, with the formation of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board and the Policy Action Group, the prospects for sustained progress in Afghanistan could not have been better enhanced. Against that backdrop, our delegation looks forward to the early adoption of a resolution that will extend the mandate of UNAMA in line with the Secretary-General's recommendations.

Finally, my delegation appreciates the presence in our midst of the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Italy.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are pleased to welcome the Foreign Minister of Italy, Mr. Massimo D'Alema. We thank Special Representative Koenigs for his detailed briefing on the situation in Afghanistan and for presenting the new report of the Secretary-General.

We are also grateful to Under-Secretary-General Costa for his briefing on the situation with respect to countering the Afghan drug threat.

We endorse the statement to be made today by the representative of Belarus on behalf of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

We share the concern with respect to the complex ongoing security situation in Afghanistan connected to the surge of violence occurring practically throughout the country. We are particularly alarmed by the fact that Taliban and Al Qaeda extremists have been able to restore their control over entire regions of the country, as seen in particular in the situation in Musa Qala. Now more than ever, robust steps are needed to curb that negative trend and to prevent radicals dreaming of revenge from implementing their dangerous plans.

In that regard, one goal that remains urgent is to build the potential of Afghan defence and security structures without which, as experience has taught us, it will not be possible to achieve meaningful progress in rectifying the security situation. Russia has already provided considerable assistance in the formation of the Afghan army. We are prepared to assist further in that area and in forming all the structures needed by an independent Afghanistan.

Given the growing threat from the Taliban and Al Qaeda, one issue of increasing relevance is strict compliance with the Security Council-imposed sanctions regime. We attach importance to the implementation of the programme of national reconciliation in the context of achieving the long-term stabilization of the country. At the same time, the process should not run counter to the basic requirements of building the Security Council's sanctions matrix in order to effectively oppose the terrorist threat.

A key task both for stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan and for countering terrorism continues to be preventing the production and spread of drugs. Of particular concern is the special linkage between drug trafficking and the financing of the Taliban's and Al Qaeda's terrorist activities, as was also noted in the report on the outcome of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan.

In order to counter the Afghan drug threat, the Russian Federation, in its capacity as presidency of the G-8 and with the active assistance of the United

Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, hosted in Moscow last year the Second Ministerial Conference on Drug Trafficking Routes from Afghanistan, which gave significant impetus to developing the Paris-Moscow process of international assistance with respect not only to stemming illicit drug production and trafficking and the smuggling of precursors through Afghanistan's neighbours, but also in the areas of health care and the resolution of social problems. The Moscow Declaration, as the outcome of that Conference, laid a stable basis for continued international efforts to counter the Afghan drug threat, the fight against which requires joint efforts and intensified work in all areas.

We believe that establishing broad international assistance in counter-terrorism, in particular by exploiting the capabilities of the CSTO and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, will allow us to achieve greater progress in that area.

Clearly, exclusively military and security methods will not improve the security situation. We must pursue wide-scale and coordinated efforts for the social and economic recovery of Afghanistan, while maintaining the active involvement of the world community. In that process, it is important to ensure the full and complete implementation of the tasks laid down in the London agreement.

Maintaining the established ethnic balance in Afghan Government structures continues to be relevant to strengthening the pillars of internal peace in Afghanistan. Of particular importance in that area is the regional dimension as well. It is important to continue to assist in the processes of regional integration and cooperation. We reaffirm our support for the leading role of the United Nations in assisting in the consolidation of peace and the restoration of Afghanistan. We note the important stabilizing role of the United Nations Mission and its useful coordinating functions in the area of recovery, including the Joint Control and Monitoring Board. We support the extension of the Mission's mandate.

Russia will continue to provide assistance in various areas to the Afghan people. That was reaffirmed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov, during his working visit to Afghanistan. We are certain that only through joint international efforts, together with those of the Afghans themselves, will we be able to truly assist in turning Afghanistan into a flourishing, independent State, free from the violence of the Taliban and from terrorism and drugs.

Ms. Wolcott Sanders (United States of America): The United States would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for their reports on the situation in Afghanistan. We share those assessments of the many challenges facing the Afghan Government and the international community, as well as the acknowledgement that we continue to make progress in key areas.

I would also like to warmly welcome Foreign Minister D'Alema to New York and to thank him for Italy's leadership role on this important issue.

The United States reaffirms its long-term commitment to Afghanistan. The United States is the leading donor. We have provided over $14.2 billion in reconstruction and security assistance since 2001 and are the leading contributor of troops to the country. The President recently requested that Congress provide an additional $11.8 billion in assistance for the remainder of 2007 and for fiscal year 2008 for Afghanistan — a significant increase in resources, compared to prior years.

Confronted with a ruthless enemy, Afghanistan faces a turning point this year. Although robust and determined military actions must be pursued whenever needed, the insurgency will not be defeated by force of arms alone. It is essential that as the international community steps up its efforts to assist the Afghan authorities, it carry out a comprehensive security, political and economic strategy. Illustrating the strategy, the new United States funding, if approved, is expected to go to security, infrastructure, governance and counter-narcotics and rural development projects.

The United States welcomes efforts aimed at increasing pressure on the Taliban. We support the existing Afghan-led reconciliation framework and share the view of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) that the list established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1267 (1999) and other relevant resolutions should be updated, specifically with new listings and de-listings. We stress the importance of an enhanced Afghan-Pakistani relationship in all fields, including security.

The United States takes this opportunity to express its appreciation for the central role played by the United Nations in Afghanistan. We commend the challenging work, which we saw at first hand during the Security Council mission in November, done by Special Representative Koenigs and the members of UNAMA and the United Nations agencies. We thank UNAMA for its efforts to date to expand throughout the country, and we encourage further expansion when security circumstances permit.

The United States believes that the United Nations should continue to promote sustained international engagement in Afghanistan through its co-chairmanship of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board and by reaching out to key members of the international community. We also encourage an adequate follow-up of UNAMA's operations in New York through regular meetings of the Afghanistan core group.

The Council and the international community need to continue to work towards a secure, stable and more prosperous Afghanistan based on the rule of law and human rights so that the country will never again fall prey to extremists and terrorists. The United States will continue to support United Nations efforts toward that end.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): First, I wish to welcome Mr. Tom Koenigs, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, and to thank him for briefing the Council. I also thank him and the members of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their efforts to accomplish the tasks entrusted to them. My delegation also wishes to thank Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Now that nearly six years have passed since the end of the rule of the previous regime in Afghanistan, that country has made significant strides towards the achievement of political, economic and social development and assuming its place among the world's nations. Significant milestones have been passed. The Bonn process was concluded successfully and the transition to the next step was marked by the adoption of the Afghanistan Compact in London in 2006. There is no doubt that the role played by the United Nations and the international community, particularly donors, was crucial to those efforts.

In spite of all of those efforts, we continue to receive news about the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. On one hand, we are told that anticipated opium production in Afghanistan for 2007 exceeds global demand. As for the security situation, it is the worst that it has been for many years and expectations are that it will not improve in the coming period. The Taliban have returned in force in some provinces, particularly Helmand, challenging the authority of the Government. Even the capital, Kabul, has not been spared from frequent terrorist bombings, while an increase in terrorist attacks is expected.

Under those conditions, the deteriorating security situation must be addressed as a matter of priority in order to prevent the country from reverting to instability. The multinational forces have responded to that threat by launching major operations not seen in the country since 2001. But that still is not enough to address the deteriorating security situation in the country. Military strategies must be combined with plans for development and national reconciliation. In that context, we welcome the decision of the European Union to establish a mission focused on law enforcement to uphold the rule of law.

In order to consolidate sustainable security, the Government must give due attention to national reconciliation. In that regard, we wish to draw attention to the need to strike a precise balance between national reconciliation and the tolerance it requires. With that purpose in mind, the Government of Afghanistan recently approved the Action Plan on Peace, Justice and Reconciliation.

Even after the efforts made and the progress achieved, we are faced with a situation that requires the international community to continue considering the situation in Afghanistan a priority issue in order to consolidate the progress achieved thus far. The time has come for the people of Afghanistan to achieve the desired level of prosperity and to consolidate what has been achieved as far as democratic transformation and advancement in the areas of justice and the rule of law are concerned.

As part of the international efforts to support the development of Afghanistan, the high-level meeting of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB), which was held in Berlin in January 2007 as a follow-up to the London conference, was a commendable and welcome step. New initiatives aimed at security,

poverty reduction, the protection of human rights and the improvement of the political environment in Afghanistan should also be welcomed.

Regional coordination plays a vital role in a successful security policy in Afghanistan. The Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan must continue to coordinate their efforts, taking in account the interests of both. With regard to regional cooperation, two conferences on regional economic cooperation were held, in Kabul and in New Delhi. In the next phase, the commitment and support of the region and the international community must be secured for the institutional frameworks that were established in those two conferences.

UNAMA has played an indispensable role in contributing to the creation of an atmosphere conducive to the establishment of stability, security and economic development. At this stage, UNAMA will continue to play a central role in promoting international commitment to support the Afghanistan Compact, coordinating humanitarian assistance, helping in the protection of human rights and supporting regional cooperation. Here, we would like to encourage UNAMA to increase its presence in the provinces and strengthen its partnership with the Afghan people.

Accordingly, we support the proposal of the Secretary-General, as set forth in his report (S/2007/152), for the extension of the mandate of UNAMA for 12 months.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in China*): Mr. President, the Chinese delegation would like to thank you for convening this meeting. The Chinese delegation would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Koenigs, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Mr. Costa, for their briefings. We would also like to thank the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, Mr. Massimo D'Alema, for his presence at this meeting.

The latest report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Afghanistan has presented us with a mixed picture. On the one hand, with the support of the international community, the Afghan Government, under the leadership of President Karzai, has made some headway in maintaining stability, improving governance and the people's livelihood, establishing law and order and protecting human rights.

On the other hand, all the progress that has been achieved so far is still very fragile. Afghanistan continues to face a series of formidable challenges, such as the increase in armed insurgencies that have caused a record number of civilian casualties, slow progress in economic and social recovery and lack of sustained improvement in the humanitarian situation, as well as the trend of widespread poppy cultivation, drug production and drug trafficking. On these issues, the Afghan Government has not yet taken firm and resolute measures.

Furthermore, the Afghan Government has not yet established effective authority and control throughout the territory of the country. Its military police and justice systems have yet to be strengthened. The Security Council should attach great importance to all these issues.

Afghanistan is now confronted with complex challenges and intricate problems. Military actions cannot replace other means, nor, in the long run, can they, address the root causes of all these problems. There is an emerging consensus among the international community to adopt a comprehensive strategy to address all the challenges facing Afghanistan at present.

While firmly combating terrorists and extremists, it is necessary to step up the efforts to promote national unity in Afghanistan so as to achieve self-sustaining peace and development in the country.

I would like to take this opportunity to underscore the following three points.

First, the comprehensive implementation of the Afghanistan Compact must continue. Over a year has elapsed since the Compact was endorsed. It is now necessary to review and sum up the progress of this implementation and to adopt further implementation measures so that the Compact can bring about a tangible and positive impact benefiting the broad population in Afghanistan at an early date. The international partnership should also effectively implement its obligations under the Compact. That is also a decisive factor.

Secondly, it is necessary to continue to support the Government of Afghanistan. President Karzai and the Government of Afghanistan are determined to

normalize the situation in the country and to integrate it into the international community. That is an encouraging development. We welcome all the policies to be adopted by the Government that are conducive to lasting peace and stability in the country. We support its efforts for national dialogue and unity. The international community should provide more direct support to the Government of Afghanistan and fully respect its ownership in the areas of internal and foreign affairs.

Thirdly, support for the unique role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) must continue. We welcome the efforts made by UNAMA, when the security situation permits, to expand the scope of activities to more provinces, so that more Afghanis can know that they are not forgotten. We would also like to encourage UNAMA to further intensify its efforts to mobilize the international community's participation in and support for the reconstruction in Afghanistan.

The year 2007 will be a decisive year for the stability and development in the country. We fully share the analysis by the Secretary-General in his report in which he states, "Afghanistan and its international partners once again find themselves at a critical juncture in the country's transition" (S/2007/152, paragraph 85). Under such circumstances, it is all the more important for the international community to continue to make united and unremitting efforts towards peace, stability and development in Afghanistan. China will continue to provide assistance to Afghanistan, within its capacity.

Mr. Voto-Bernales (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we thank Mr. Tom Koenigs, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, and Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, for their briefings. We also welcome the presence at this meeting of Mr. Massimo D'Alema, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy.

Peru wishes to highlight the willingness of the Afghan people and Government to find a path to peace and national reconciliation that will enable them to stabilize the institutional regime. In this way, the Government can improve the conditions for security and reaffirm its authority, protect human rights and promote efforts to progressively reduce illicit crops that are a source of violence, corruption and instability. Peru supports the proposals of the Afghan Government and welcomes the reiterated will of the international community to cooperate in these tasks and to achieve the goals set out in the Afghanistan Compact.

The report of the Secretary-General presents us with some progress in the areas of the functioning of the democratic system, of security and of coordination for regional and international cooperation. It describes the fragile nature of the process. Reality presents us with a picture in which the political and social order continues to face serious threats that endanger the achievements gained so far. Some of them may be seen as challenges to the process of ownership of development plans in Afghanistan.

We can identify a number of challenges in various critical areas in Afghanistan. For example, there are problems due to a lack of technical capacity or preparedness on the part of staff, problems with paying salaries, problems of corruption and in coordination efforts between the central Government and the provinces, as well as between the cooperating institutions. Furthermore, given the existence of long-entrenched practices resulting from conflict and misrule, there is a need to introduce respect for human rights and the rule of law, professionalism and impartiality in the activities of the State.

There is general recognition of the fact that security problems caused by terrorist and other extremist groups are of the greatest concern. We therefore need a strategy that vigorously opposes such groups while at the same time weakening the social fabric that protects and sustains them. The briefings that we have heard this morning underline the fact that behind these problems lie drug trafficking and its negative effects: growing corruption and crime in general. The eradication of drug crops and support for rural development are therefore more necessary than ever in order to reverse such trends.

Peru believes that the support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is essential if we are to deal in a comprehensive manner with the serious problem of drugs on the basis of shared responsibility, under the leadership of the Government of Afghanistan and with the cooperation of the international community.

Security in Afghanistan must be seen primarily as the responsibility of the citizens themselves. Protecting civilians and their human rights must be at the heart of

security operations. The ownership of the process belongs to the Afghan people; they must adopt policies that protect political, civil, social and economic rights. The Afghans themselves must give priority to ensuring that the legislation and governmental actions guarantee equal rights and opportunities without any distinctions. Impunity must not be tolerated for human rights violations, including, in particular, those that have a negative impact on or threaten the full integration of women, their involvement in Afghan society and their enjoyment of their rights and opportunities as citizens.

Finally, we support the work of United Nations Mission of Assistance in Afghanistan and the extension of its mandate, and we join in the appeal to the international community to redouble its efforts to support, in a properly coordinated manner, all activities aimed at ensuring stability in Afghanistan, improving security conditions, strengthening the institutional fabric and laying the foundations for sustainable economic growth in productive and viable activities.

Mr. Gayama (Congo) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this important briefing on Afghanistan, which gives the Security Council an opportunity to review the most recent developments in the country.

In this regard, we would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Tom Koenigs, for his detailed briefing, as well as Mr. Antonio Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, for his briefing.

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome the presence in the Security Council of His Excellency Mr. Massimo D'Alema, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, and we share his sense of relief regarding the release of journalist Mr. Daniele Mastrogiacomo. That dramatic episode only strengthens my delegation's resolve to demand compliance with international conventions on the protection of civilians in conflict. We firmly condemn the practice of the Taliban and other terrorists of using innocent victims as human shields or as bargaining chips, as well as other prohibited practices.

We would like to take this opportunity to express regret for the loss of life among civilians, United Nations staff, international forces and the Afghan army and police force. We commend the courage of those men, women and children. Their sacrifice demonstrates how difficult it is to stabilize, even to a limited degree, a situation that is still haunted by the spectre of chaos.

However, if the efforts undertaken so far are not to be in vain, the international community must more than ever contribute to building a democratic and prosperous nation in Afghanistan. Clearly, for a long time to come we will need to avoid making the mistake of underestimating an enemy that — like the Hydra — always seems able to come back to life, despite the blows inflicted on it. In a cynical gesture, that enemy recently celebrated the fiftieth birthday of its leader, while continuing to spread terror and chaos by means of kidnappings, murder and other violent acts.

Given such developments, my delegation believes that — without giving up the military option or measures to strengthen security, which have demonstrated their value — we should show greater imagination in making every effort to achieve lasting peace by all means possible, in particular by adopting new strategies based on dialogue and cooperation among the players within the country, as well as those outside — at least at the regional level.

We therefore encourage the actions of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board established by the Afghan Government and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. We also welcome the partnership established by the International Security Assistance Force, the Afghan Government and the international community which is firmly committed to defending and ensuring the stability of Afghanistan in the long term.

That alliance recently demonstrated its usefulness on the ground, as shown by the success of Operation Achilles and the increasingly effective presence of the Afghan National Army. In this context, the recent seizure by the Afghan police of a major shipment of drugs is a clear sign that the activities of national forces are achieving results in this area. The international community has always stressed the critical importance of this issue in expressing its determination to stay the course and to persevere in its work to build the institutional capacity of the country.

Eradicating the scourge of drug production continues to be a major challenge. We believe that, for its part, the Afghan Government is duty bound, in supporting the efforts of its international partners and strengthening hopes for peace, to continue to demonstrate goodwill with respect, for example, to

restoring a climate of trust and cooperation in the region. In this respect, we encourage the effective holding of quarterly meetings, as agreed upon between the Foreign Ministries of Afghanistan and Pakistan, with a view to strengthening cooperation between those two countries in the area of security. Such an approach, which would be based on the monitoring of the security situation by the Afghans themselves, would facilitate the establishment of the authority of the State in all of the provinces of the country so that the military strategy could gradually yield to the objectives of the Afghanistan Compact. This, in turn, would promote the participation of all Afghans in the process and would lead their country towards stability, peace, democracy and progress.

Finally, my delegation thanks the delegation of Italy for having prepared a draft resolution on UNAMA in accordance with the Secretary-General's recommendations, which we support — particularly the recommendation to extend UNAMA's mandate.

Mr. Jenie (Indonesia): At the outset, I would like to express to you, Mr. President, my delegation's appreciation for convening this debate on the situation in Afghanistan. I should also like to welcome in our midst Mr. Massimo D'Alema, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy.

We thank Mr. Tom Koenigs, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive briefing. We also appreciate the participation in this debate of Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and we are grateful for his important presentation.

Afghanistan has been undergoing a steady transformation since it emerged from armed conflict. Progress has been visible in the economic and political spheres. The launch of the Afghanistan Compact and the successful holding of presidential elections in October 2004 marked major achievements in the country.

Yet, at this moment, optimism about peace, stability and economic development in Afghanistan seems to be seriously challenged by the increase in the activities of insurgent forces in some parts of the country. My delegation is concerned about the harmful effects of those activities on the Government's capacity to provide security and basic services to the Afghan people and to ensure the enjoyment of their fundamental freedoms and basic rights.

In that regard, we commend various initiatives proposed by the Afghan Government with a view to enhancing security in the country. However, we believe that all parties — including the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) — should continue to take all necessary measures to prevent civilian casualties in their operations.

Considering the fact that, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report (S/2007/152), the revitalization of the insurgency has also been caused by adverse socio-political factors such as popular alienation, the monopolization of power and the marginalization of those outside the dominant social and political groups, we hold the view that civic measures that include reconciliation, participatory decision-making and inclusive political processes are also of critical importance for the achievement of sustainable peace in the country.

My delegation also attaches great significance to the national unity programmes — including at the village level — that the Afghan Government is currently promoting. We hope that those programmes can help to promote national ownership through the participatory contributions and inclusive involvement of all segments of Afghan society.

My delegation welcomes the positive developments that the country has achieved in its economic sector. We hope that the decline in the inflation rate and the increase in development expenditures will promote further economic progress. Afghanistan's trade relations with key countries in the region, which amounted to more than $2.5 billion in 2006, are also an encouraging achievement. We commend the increase in Afghanistan's economic cooperation with regional partners, and we believe that its enhancement will help to integrate the country into the regional dynamics and the global economy.

My delegation also underlines the significance of regional initiatives in the political and security fields that include Afghanistan. Close cooperation with Pakistan is of particular importance, given the presence of cross-border elements in the security of both countries.

With regard to border cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan, my delegation sees some

opportunities for both countries to develop joint programmes along the border. On the basis of our experience in advancing border diplomacy with neighbouring countries, the establishment of a jointly administered economic zone and the joint development of traditional commerce involving local merchants at the borders have proved viable.

My delegation welcomes the establishment of the Tripartite Commission, which involves a military component from Afghanistan and Pakistan, in addition to ISAF. We hold the view that similar mechanisms aimed at promoting political dialogue should be considered.

My delegation is also concerned about the difficulties that the narco-economy has brought to the efforts of the people and the Government of Afghanistan to reconstruct their country. The 2007 UNODC survey predicts that an increase in the main poppy-growing areas of the southern provinces could result in an overall increase in opium poppy cultivation in 2007.

We fully share the views of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the UNODC Executive Director as to the importance of introducing alternative sustainable livelihoods to the community as part of the overall efforts to decrease opium cultivation. The successful story of the Golden Triangle in South-East Asia could be taken as one lesson learned.

With regard to UNAMA, my delegation applauds the role that the Mission has played in supporting the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We welcome UNAMA's intention to increase the number of its provincial offices. In our view, that step will help to build the capacity of local governments to provide basic services and promote good governance.

UNAMA's contribution to the rebuilding of Afghanistan will remain pivotal in the future. Considering the magnitude of the challenges that Afghanistan continues to face, my delegation supports the continuing role of UNAMA in assisting the Afghan people and Government in achieving their goals.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

We, too, wish to express our thanks to Mr. Tom Koenigs, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. We also welcome the presence of Mr. Massimo D'Alema, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, among us today.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2007/152) describes the current state of affairs in Afghanistan in all its complexity. On the one hand, the report outlines the commendable progress that the Government of Afghanistan is making in several key areas, such as reconstruction and development and the strengthening of democratic institutions. On the other hand, the report describes enormous challenges, including an increase in insurgent activities, increasing cultivation of opium poppy, slow progress in economic and social development and widespread corruption.

The security problem is at the forefront of the challenges facing Afghanistan and poses a serious threat to nation-building. South Africa supports political dialogue and encourages political solutions and all efforts aimed at improving the security situation in Afghanistan. We also support the efforts by the Afghan security forces, with the cooperation of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), aimed at maintaining security in Afghanistan. However, we call on those forces to exercise caution and to avoid causing civilian casualties in carrying out their activities.

Concerning the issue of narcotics, the Secretary-General's report draws a bleak picture of the situation in Afghanistan. The report makes it clear that, despite counter-narcotics measures adopted by the Government, opium poppy cultivation and the drug economy continue to grow. My delegation is concerned at the upsurge in the illegal drug production and trafficking linked to opium poppy cultivation and the threat that it poses to the stability of Afghanistan. We encourage the Government of Afghanistan to improve its institutional capacity for service delivery and development in support of viable alternatives to poppy cultivation.

With regard to the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, South Africa commends the progress made within the context of that mechanism, as it provides a framework for facilitating cooperation between the Government of Afghanistan and the international community. In that regard, we support the full implementation of the Afghanistan Compact, with full ownership by the Government of Afghanistan, and

we encourage the Government to translate that ownership into further practical action.

We would like to stress the importance of regional cooperation in achieving success in Afghanistan. We are encouraged by improving relations between Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries, as mentioned in the report. The Secretary-General's report noted an increase in trade between Afghanistan and its key economic partners. In addition, the report argues that neighbouring countries have contributed extensive financial and technical assistance to Afghanistan's infrastructure.

We commend that cooperation, as it is critical to foster the trust required to achieve peace, security and development in the region, including continued cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan on improving security in the border areas.

Finally, we believe that the best way to break the cycle of challenges in Afghanistan is to continue what the Government of Afghanistan, the international community and UNAMA are already doing in that country. My delegation supports the activities of UNAMA and stands ready to assist Afghanistan on its path to a stable and prosperous future.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): Mr. President, I should like to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of March and by expressing my delegation's appreciation for your having convened today's meeting on the situation in Afghanistan.

My delegation would also like to thank Mr. Tom Koenigs, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, and Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, for their informative briefings. We are pleased to have Mr. Massimo D'Alema, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy, among us for today's discussion.

My delegation is grateful to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the situation in Afghanistan. His report provides an overview of the current situation and of the multiple threats that we continue to face alongside our international partners.

In assessing the current situation in Afghanistan, we must look back to where Afghanistan was five and half years ago. We are all aware of the many achievements that have taken place since 2001, to which we have referred on numerous occasions in statements before the Council. I shall therefore limit my comments to some of the most pressing challenges facing both Afghanistan and the international community in our joint endeavour towards achieving lasting peace, stability and prosperity in my country.

Terrorism, narcotics, weak State institutions and the slow pace of reconstruction are among our main challenges. As such, it is safe to state that we have jointly underestimated the magnitude of the challenges facing Afghanistan. Therefore, it is increasingly obvious that a renewed commitment on the part of the international community is required to address the remaining obstacles and consolidate the gains made in past years.

The prevailing security situation remains at the forefront of our challenges. Regrettably, in 2006 we witnessed a significant surge in terrorist-related activities, occurring mainly in the southern parts of the country. Those activities have not only affected the daily lives of the Afghan people but have also had a significant negative impact on various sectors, including the health and education sectors, as well as on development and reconstruction projects undertaken with the support of our international partners.

Improving security in Afghanistan will require a comprehensive, multifaceted approach — one which will address both the internal and regional dimensions of the problem. Internally, our national army and police lack the number of personnel required to effectively combat a resurgent enemy force. Therefore, accelerating the recruitment and training of our security forces will be crucial to achieving our intended goal of a standing army of 68,000 and an 82,000-strong police force by the end of 2008. The success of our security institutions in effectively combating a revitalized and well-equipped enemy force will depend largely on the level of international assistance in terms of financial, logistical and technical support.

In that regard, we welcome the recent decision taken by the United States of America, NATO allies and other international partners to increase their level of financial and military assistance to our security forces.

The regional dimension relates directly to the existence of foreign sanctuaries that train, equip, recruit and indoctrinate extremist fighters carrying out attacks in Afghanistan. As indicated in paragraph 7 of the Secretary-General's report:

> "Many attacks appear to have been financed from abroad. According to national and international security sources, the training camps for these attacks are located outside Afghanistan." *(S/2007/152)*

It is by now evident that unless external sources of insecurity are addressed in a comprehensive and resolute manner, our efforts to achieve a stable and prosperous Afghanistan may be in vain. The threat posed by the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other extremists is not limited to Afghanistan alone; rather, it puts at risk the stability of the region and areas beyond. We are pleased to note that that fact has finally been acknowledged by the wider international community.

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan attaches great importance to the role of regional cooperation in the combat against terrorism. While commending the crucial role of the international community in providing security, we remain firmly convinced that regional cooperation will be indispensable to achieving our shared goal of a stable and prosperous Afghanistan. We welcome in this respect the recent arrest of the former Defence Minister of the Taliban by the authorities of the Government of Pakistan. We hope that such measures will continue in a sustainable manner.

Afghanistan continues to maintain high-level and constructive contacts with the Government of Pakistan with a view to improving security along the border region. These interactions are taking place both within the framework of the Tripartite Commission and on a bilateral basis. Efforts are now under way to convene a cross-border jirga of tribal and influential figures from both sides of the border. In that connection, we are pleased to inform the Council that the first preparatory meeting of the jirga commission took place on 13 March and that the next meeting is scheduled to convene in Kabul in the coming month.

We look forward to the upcoming Third Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, scheduled to convene in Islamabad in late 2007. The Conference will offer another opportunity to further enhance regional cooperation in achieving security and development in Afghanistan.

Apart from security, another area that requires due attention is the social and economic development of the country. The inextricable link between development and security necessitates a particular focus on accelerating the pace of implementing development and reconstruction projects throughout the country. That will in turn have a positive impact in creating employment opportunities and providing basic services to achieve substantial and sustainable progress in improving the daily lives of the people. In that regard, particular attention should be given to areas affected by conflict.

As the principal mechanism mandated to coordinate the efforts of Afghanistan and the international community in the implementation of the interim National Development Strategy and the Afghanistan Compact, the Joint Coordinating and Monitoring Board (JCMB) has proved its importance. My delegation therefore underscores the need to further strengthen the role of the JCMB, with a view to improving the effectiveness of international aid and promoting greater international engagement.

No matter how intense or skilful, our efforts alone will not be sufficient to enhance the capacity of our State institutions to meet the needs of the people. While expressing our sincere appreciation for the support of the international community over the past five and half years, it is worth mentioning that Afghanistan has received far less assistance from the donor community in comparison to other post-conflict countries. We therefore reiterate the need for increased and sustained assistance to meet the benchmarks of our National Development Strategy and the Afghanistan Compact. In that context, we believe that better coordination of donor assistance will be beneficial in achieving greater transparency and tangible results.

The fight against narcotics remains a top priority of Afghanistan, as it poses a threat to the stability and security of Afghanistan and the region, given its nexus with terrorism. Eliminating that menace from the region will require a concerted effort by the international community. For our part, we have initiated a series of substantial measures to that end. The National Drug Control Strategy forms the basis of our counter-narcotics endeavours. It should be noted that the successful implementation of the Strategy will

only be realized if we are able to provide other modes of legal economic activity. Regional cooperation will be key to overcoming that common threat. In that regard, we underscore the need for an equal effort on the part of transit and consumer countries, in accordance with the principle of shared responsibility.

We pay tribute to the United Nations for its central role in leading international efforts to implement the Afghanistan Compact. In that context, we welcome the intention of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to expand its presence to additional provinces in Afghanistan, as an important step towards further strengthening United Nations activities in Afghanistan.

As we have now entered the critical phase of State-building, it is even more imperative that we maintain the current level of international consensus on Afghanistan and intensify our efforts to overcome the remaining challenges. We look forward to continue to work with our international partners to achieve our shared objectives. We are more committed than ever before to realize the vision set out in the Afghanistan Compact.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the sustained support of the international community for our efforts aimed at achieving a stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

In conclusion, we would like to thank Mr. Tom Koenigs, Special Representative of the Secretary General for Afghanistan, and the members of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan for their tireless efforts in carrying out their important mandate.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): It is a pleasure to see the representative of South Africa, an eminent colleague, presiding over the Security Council during this month, which promises to be eventful and important. I hope that the President will not be overtaken by the Ides of March. I also wish to express our great appreciation for the active presidency of Slovakia in the month of February. Let me also welcome the participation in today's meeting of Mr. Massimo D'Alema, Italy's Minister for Foreign Affairs.

We have listened carefully to the briefings provided by Mr. Tom Koenigs, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and by Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. We have also studied the latest report (S/2007/152) of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan.

As the briefings and the report indicate, there are multiple challenges to the restoration of peace, security and development in Afghanistan, namely, terrorism, the Taliban, extremism, drugs, criminals, warlords, factional friction and inadequate security and governance, as well as a relatively small international presence in Afghanistan.

This is an appropriate opportunity to develop an objective and correct assessment of the environment in Afghanistan and to formulate a strategy for success that responds to that environment. That strategy must combine military containment with political reconciliation, administrative control and rapid socio-economic development. It must build peace in Afghanistan through a bottom-up approach — village by village, district by district — offering incentives and disincentives to win the cooperation and support of the local population in the south and south-east of the country. It is vital to win the hearts and minds of the people, which is more important than killing or capturing insurgents. It is essential to adopt military tactics that do not create more alienation, opposition and enemies. Most important, our strategy for success must accelerate reconstruction and development. It must offer hope to the people — hope for peace, for jobs and for better lives for themselves and their children. Such a strategy could be implemented through traditional structures and practices, such as the convening of tribal Jirgas in the troubled parts of Afghanistan.

Pakistan's frontier regions have been deeply affected by three decades of war and conflict in Afghanistan. After the United States intervention in 2001, many Al-Qaida and Taliban elements crossed the border into Pakistan. The people of our frontier region, who constitute 1 per cent of our total population, have also been afflicted by the rise of extremism and terrorism. As part of our programme for modernization and rapid socio-economic development, it is in Pakistan's vital interest to eliminate Al-Qaida terrorists, Taliban militancy and Talibanization in the frontier regions of Pakistan.

The success of stabilization, reconciliation and development in Afghanistan will contribute to

Pakistan's campaign against extremism and terrorism in our frontier regions. Likewise, our success against Al-Qaida, the Taliban militancy and Talibanization will contribute to peace and security in Afghanistan. Peace in Afghanistan will also enable Pakistan to realize its strategic objective of serving, together with Afghanistan, as the hub for trade and economic cooperation between the adjacent regions of South Asia, West Asia and Central Asia. Our commitment to promoting peace, security and progress in Afghanistan is complete, unwavering and unquestionable.

Despite media reports and some unfortunate public statements, the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan is close, cooperative and intense. Our leaders exchange frequent visits. We offer transit to Afghanistan's external trade. Our bilateral trade has grown to $1.2 billion and is rising rapidly. Pakistan has committed $300 million for Afghanistan's development. Sixty thousand Pakistanis are working in Afghanistan. The next Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan will be held in Islamabad later this year.

Pakistan is also participating actively in the joint efforts of the international coalition and the Afghan Government to promote security in Afghanistan, and especially in the border regions. Cooperation in the military Tripartite Commission is operational and constant. The Commission now has a joint intelligence operations centre in Kabul. It has also created an operational coordination working group.

This is an appropriate occasion to outline the measures which Pakistan is taking, or intends to take, to contribute to the success of the campaign for peace, stability and progress in Afghanistan and our frontier region.

First, as to our campaign against Al-Qaeda, the Pakistan Army and intelligence services have played the leading role in much of the success against Al-Qaeda. We have captured over 700 Al-Qaeda terrorists. Most of Al-Qaeda's command and control structure was destroyed with Pakistan's support. We have launched over 90 military operations in some of the most treacherous terrains to eliminate the presence of terrorists, especially foreign fighters. Vice-President Cheney of the United States recently said "I have often said before and I believe it is still true that we have captured and killed more Al-Qaeda in Pakistan than any place else". Pakistan has lost over 700 soldiers in those operations. In retaliation, the terrorists have launched several suicide attacks against our leaders, our security forces and civilian targets, but that has not deterred us. We shall continue to take resolute action against any suspected terrorist activity anywhere on our territory. Al-Qaeda will certainly not be allowed to regroup on our soil.

Secondly, as to our actions against the Taliban, over the past three years, we have captured and handed over to Afghanistan 1,500 Taliban militants, including a large number of the leadership. Just during the last year, we have handed over 300 captured Taliban members to Afghanistan. However, as past and present United Nations reports have noted, most of the Taliban activity is within Afghanistan, as are its five command structures. That should not be distorted. Similarly, as for the financing of the Taliban from abroad, the major source of financing — the production of drugs and the drugs trade — lies inside Afghanistan.

Thirdly, Pakistan has taken significant measures to control the difficult 2,500-kilometre border with Afghanistan. Pakistan has, for the first time in recent history, inducted its armed forces in the tribal areas. Eighty thousand Pakistani troops are now deployed in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and along the border with Afghanistan. That number is higher than the combined forces of the international coalition and the Afghan National Army. We have established 1,000 border posts. There are 300 on the other side. We plan to fence about 35 kilometres of the border in the roughest terrain where clandestine crossings take place. In response to the concerns of some of our friends, we are reviewing the plan to mine parts of the border. Pakistan is also introducing stricter measures to better regulate the legal border traffic. Over one border crossing alone — in Chaman, Baluchistan — about 40,000 people and 14,000 vehicles cross in both directions each day. An estimated 300,000 people cross the Afghanistan-Pakistan border legally each day. To improve identification checks, we are introducing biometric cards. It is not very helpful when border guards on the other side cut up and throw away those cards.

I would also like to underline that control of the border is a joint responsibility of Pakistan, Afghanistan and the international coalition forces. Pakistan cannot accept the entire onus of controlling the border. Mr. Koenigs has referred to suicide attackers, facilitators and Taliban commanders crossing over

from Pakistan. I would like to say that the crossing of the border is in both directions, and I hope he will agree that it is in both directions and that therefore the Taliban must be controlled on both sides of the border. Pakistan should also be provided with real-time intelligence as well as with the electronic and other equipment that we have requested to enhance our ability to control the long and difficult border.

Fourthly, Pakistan will act shortly to eliminate the atrocious allegations about so-called sanctuaries and safe havens for the Taliban in terrorist training camps. That information is unsubstantiated and should not be given currency. What happens is that Taliban militants mostly seek to merge into the refugee camps that are close to the border. In a camp of some 80,000 Afghans, it is obviously difficult to identify who those Taliban militants are. We have therefore reached an agreement with the Afghan Government to relocate four of the large camps — Pir Alizai and Gidri Jungle in Baluchistan, and Jallozai and Kachi Garhi in the North-West Frontier Province — to secure sites inside Afghanistan. We ask for the cooperation of the international community to create the facilities on the Afghan side to receive those refugees. Thus, we shall end this story of sanctuaries.

Pakistan has also initiated a programme to repatriate all the remaining 3 million Afghan refugees within the next three years. We have hosted them for 30 years without any appreciable international assistance. That has placed an unconscionable burden on our national exchequer, our economy, our environment and our society. We hope that conditions will be created in Afghanistan for the return of those refugees in dignity and security. The international community should provide assistance and cooperation to Pakistan and Afghanistan in the repatriation process.

Fifthly, Pakistan is pursuing a comprehensive strategy to promote peace and progress in our frontier regions. That involves military, political, economic and administrative components. The objective of the strategy is to win the hearts and minds of the local population and to isolate the militants from the moderates. The North Waziristan Agreement, concluded with the tribal elders, was essentially an exchange of peace for development. While there may be room for better implementation, we believe that the Agreement represents a correct approach and the right strategy. The Agreement has brought relative calm to the area. Activity from across the North Waziristan border has declined. Some assert that the total number of incidents inside Afghanistan have increased, but there is no proven direct correlation of those incidents and the conclusion of the North Waziristan Agreement. Meanwhile, violations by some recalcitrant elements in North Waziristan have been adequately punished. Pakistan continues to retain the option of striking at terrorists where and when they are located, as we have demonstrated recently.

We have advocated that approach of peace, reconciliation and development on the Afghanistan side as well. Similar agreements could be reached through local jirgas. They can offer a modality to establish relative if not complete peace in south and south-east Afghanistan. That was the essence of the understanding, at the tripartite summit in Washington last September, to promote the convening of jirgas.

The first meeting of the Pakistan and Afghanistan Jirga Commission — as was mentioned by my Afghan colleague — was held last week in Islamabad. The two sides agreed to stop the blame game and to increase cooperation to address common problems of border control and refugee repatriation. Meanwhile, Pakistan believes there is a need to rapidly develop the areas on both sides of the border. For development of our tribal areas, we are grateful to the United States for its commitment of $750 million over the next five years. We would like to seek greater help from other sources as well for that vital objective.

We are also working with the United States to establish reconstruction opportunity zones in the tribal areas. Pakistan's private sector is investing in industry and manufacturing in those areas. The United States has promised special tariff- and duty-free access to the United States market for products from those areas. We ask the European Union to provide similar access. Similar reconstruction opportunity zones could be established on the Afghan side as well. Pakistan stands willing to coordinate with Afghanistan to promote the creation of such zones.

In conclusion, let me say that Pakistan wants friendly relations with Afghanistan. Our destinies are inextricably bound together. We respect each other's sovereignty, we treat Afghanistan with equality, and we wish that both countries would respect each other's territorial integrity. Pakistan will continue to extend its cooperation to promote peace and stability in Afghanistan and to combat terrorism in all its forms.

We hope that the Government of Afghanistan and others concerned will accept their own responsibilities to address the multiple challenges within Afghanistan. That is a collective endeavour and a joint responsibility. Political expediency and occasional frustration over failure must not be allowed to wreck the cooperative framework that has been established, that is operational and that is so vital for success in Afghanistan.

The President: I now call on the representative of Germany.

Mr. Matussek (Germany): I have the honour to speak for the European Union. The European Union welcomes this debate prior to the upcoming renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report and Tom Koenigs and by Antonio Maria Costa for their briefings this morning. We are honoured by the presence of Mr. D'Alema, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy.

We have taken note of the recommendations of the Secretary-General with regard to the focus of the activities of UNAMA in the upcoming months. We agree that those should include: strengthening international coordination, including in the humanitarian field, and continuing to contribute to the protection of human rights and to extending good offices through outreach in Afghanistan and in the region.

We shall further reflect upon the detailed analysis of the Secretary-General. He has presented a mixed picture of current trends. Progress in some areas appears to contrast with an overall precarious security situation, widespread lack of good governance, the alienation of segments of the population and a thriving narcotics industry.

The Afghanistan Compact, based on Afghan leadership and partnership with the international community, will continue to be the strategic framework for our common efforts. The United Nations plays the key role in coordinating efforts for institution-building and reconstruction within the framework of the Afghanistan Compact, in particular as co-Chair of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board. The European Union commends UNAMA, under the excellent leadership of Tom Koenigs, for its outstanding work.

We underline our appreciation for the central role of the Joint Board as the main coordination body, both within the international community and with the Government of Afghanistan. The recent Board meeting in Berlin was an important step towards enhanced coordination.

The European Union welcomes the recent extension of UNAMA's field presence with 17 locations now, as well as the plans for the opening of two new provincial offices by May 2007, security conditions permitting. We encourage the United Nations to continue expanding its network throughout the country after that time. We also welcome all efforts, including those of UNAMA, to promote regional cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours. The stabilization of Afghanistan is key to the stability of the whole region.

The European Union encourages the development of regional cooperation through political dialogue, increased economic links, and confidence-building measures between Afghanistan and all its neighbours, including the Central Asian States. We call on Afghanistan and Pakistan to cooperate closely in order to address insecurity in the border areas, while we urge Pakistan to build on current efforts to prevent the use of its territory by the Taliban.

The European Union has made a commitment to long-term support for the people and Government of Afghanistan. The core principles of the European Union engagement are to promote Afghan leadership, responsibility and ownership, and to foster the development of a democratic, secure and sustainable Afghan state. The Afghanistan Compact and the Joint EU-Afghanistan Political Declaration of 16 November 2005, remain a comprehensive framework for European Union engagement with Afghanistan. To cite but one figure: in the 2002-2006 period, the European Union, as the second-largest donor, collectively contributed €3.7 billion in aid to Afghanistan, apart from large contributions to the International Security Assistance Force and NATO made by European Union members.

The European Union remains concerned about the still-thriving narcotics industry. The most recent survey by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime suggests that opium cultivation in 2007 may not be lower than the record harvest in 2006. Trends apparently vary among provinces. The results show

clear correlations between insurgency and illicit drug-related activities. The European Union recognizes the significant and detrimental impact the production and trafficking in drugs has on the stability and security of Afghanistan, the surrounding region and the European Union member States themselves. Most recently, the European Council has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the Government of Afghanistan, which has primary ownership of the process, in its efforts to tackle drugs through the National Drug Control Strategy, including anti-corruption efforts.

We have also reaffirmed our support for the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan to promote and extend the rule of law through development of the police, courts, prisons and the wider justice system. We recognize the important role of counter-narcotics as part of this. The European Union intends to fund a regional project against chemical precursor diversion under the European Union's new Stability Instrument.

In February 2007, the European Council decided to set up a European Security and Defence Policy Mission to Afghanistan in the field of policing, with linkages to the wider rule of law. That mission will work towards an Afghan police force of local ownership that respects human rights and operates throughout the country, within the framework of the rule of law. Particular attention will be paid to ensuring complementarity and mutual reinforcement with the European Union's actions, especially its engagement in reform of the justice sector as well as with international partners active in the fields of security sector reform. This justice programme aims to professionalize the judicial and public prosecution service, for instance, through reforms to pay, grading and recruitment, as well as the establishment of a code of ethics. The programme could also assist in the development of a new national legal aid system and thus improve citizen access to justice. This work is being designed to dovetail with the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) mission.

The European Union notes the adoption by Parliament on 10 March 2007 of the Charter on National Reconciliation, which has now been signed by the President, and the concerns expressed about the possible impact of some of its provisions. In this context, the European Union recalls that the Action Plan on Peace, Justice and Reconciliation is part of the Afghanistan Compact and underlines the need to ensure its full implementation.

Freedom of speech and free media have been among the most impressive achievements of recent years in Afghanistan and continue to be key elements of democratization. However, the European Union has noted with some concern that recent amendments to the draft media law under discussion in Parliament appear to enhance Government control of the media, including potential for direct interference with personnel decisions and content transmitted by Radio Television Afghanistan. In our view, the draft media law first enacted by a presidential decree in 2005 provided a sound basis for the protection of free and independent media regulation mechanisms. We hope that the media law will be adopted on this basis.

In the spirit of European Union-Afghan partnership, the European Union stands by Afghanistan. The European Union will continue to work together with the Government of Afghanistan to stabilize and rebuild the country by addressing issues of both security and development. We wish the United Nations, and particularly the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), success in their efforts. The European Union will continue to support their mission.

Croatia, Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Moldova and Ukraine have aligned themselves with this European Union statement.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand.

Ms. Banks (New Zealand): I would like to thank the Special Representative for his briefing today. We join others in commending the work the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) does in facilitating the international community's engagement in Afghanistan and its close working relationship with the Government. Also, our thanks to Executive Director Costa for his update.

One of the core messages of the UNAMA quarterly report is that Afghanistan needs sustained and consistent support from the international community. In this context, I am pleased to advise that last week New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark announced that New Zealand is extending the following commitments for a further year to September 2008: first, the 120 strong Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) based in Bamyan province; second, the two personnel to help train the Afghan National Army;

third, up to five officers to serve at the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) headquarters; and fourthly, three police officers to help train the Afghan National Police.

In addition, we shall have two health personnel at the Multinational Medical Unit at Kandahar Airfield. We have also drawn on our close relationship with Singapore to incorporate a Singapore Armed Forces contribution in our PRT in Afghanistan to undertake humanitarian tasks. Further, and alongside our military commitments in Bamyan, New Zealand is implementing a three-year NZ$15 million programme of assistance supporting human rights, governance, education and sustainable rural livelihoods.

With respect to today's report, we note that the Secretary-General says that successful completion of the ongoing reforms, including of the Ministry of Interior, are a precondition for achieving sustainable peace in Afghanistan. We fully endorse these comments and encourage the Government of Afghanistan to act decisively to build public confidence in its security institutions and the rule of law. It is critical that the influence of central structures is spread to all regions of Afghanistan. Like others, we are gravely concerned at the threat posed by the insurgency. We agree that a sustained holistic effort, including from Afghanistan's neighbours, is required to address these complex issues.

We note with concern the unmet humanitarian needs of many Afghans, both those displaced by armed conflict in the south and those affected by drought in many parts of the country. We call on all parties to work toward improving coordination of humanitarian assistance and ensuring protection.

In closing, it is clear that there are enormous challenges before us. The last five years have seen considerable positive progress in Afghanistan. But the job is not yet done, and international support is still needed to build a stable and secure Afghanistan. New Zealand remains committed to helping secure Afghanistan's future.

The President: I now call on the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Hamburger (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing the Netherlands to take the floor. We associate ourselves with the statement made by Germany on behalf of the European Union, but we have requested to add a few remarks in view of our own very concrete commitment to peace, security and sustainable development in Afghanistan. We are both a substantial contributor both in terms of personnel, 2,000 on the ground through the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and also in terms of our financial contribution of more than €70 million annually to development cooperation, mainly through United Nations and World Bank channels.

The year 2007 should be the year of improved governance in Afghanistan. It is encouraging to see that the Afghan Government is indeed determined to fight corruption and create a better functioning justice system. Governance is the key to improving the Government's credibility.

Reconciliation and transitional justice are essential for sustainable peace in Afghanistan. Preventing impunity and bringing justice is needed to overcome the legacy of conflict. In that regard, amnesty for war crimes, crimes against humanity and other gross human rights violations would, in our view, not be in conformity with Afghanistan's obligations under international law. The adequate implementation of the Transitional Justice Action Plan launched by President Karzai in early December 2006 is key.

ISAF is a United Nations-mandated mission, with full international legitimacy and the support of the Afghan Government and the Afghan people. While it might sound like a truism in this Council, I wish to underscore that ISAF is inclusive. NATO and non-NATO countries alike participate. ISAF is active in many areas of Afghanistan. Thirty-one thousand men and women from 37 countries, are working on a daily basis in 26 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) to bring back security and economic perspectives to the Afghan people. We clearly would welcome more countries joining this common endeavour, with military and non-military means.

This is not NATO acting on its own. On the contrary, ISAF is an assistance force that is providing stability and security so that international organizations and other civilian development actors can succeed.

Together with non-NATO partner Australia, the Netherlands is deployed in the southern province of Uruzgan. That region has seen good results in the last seven months. In Uruzgan, there is stability and security within the Afghan Development Zones. These zones are growing steadily. The Netherlands-Australian

PRT is covering about 60 per cent of the population of the province. Diplomacy is being conducted by involving key tribal leaders, defence is being bolstered and visible development projects are directly reaching 40,000 Uruzgani. Through these joint efforts, we are indeed reaching results.

We welcome the intention of the Secretary-General to open up permanent United Nations offices in more southern provinces, including, we are sure, Uruzgan. A United Nations presence is a prerequisite for the implementation of national development programmes in the southern provinces and for more activities by non-governmental organizations. We would therefore encourage the United Nations to gear its programmes more towards strengthening provincial government in the south.

The United Nations, ISAF and the European Union are united on the aims of their respective missions: to help the Afghan people to build a prosperous democracy. There can be no development without security, and vice versa. International civil and military stabilization missions will succeed only if there is better cooperation and mutual understanding among development, political and military actors.

Finally, I would like to say a word on counter-narcotics. The Afghan Government is determined to make its policies work. We applaud that. But eradication without mitigating measures for poor farmers is counterproductive and will hamper our stabilization and reconstruction effort. Eradication will be effective only if it is part of a wider strategy. We should limit the impact on small and disenfranchised farmers. Therefore we will deploy extra projects in Uruzgan to minimize the destabilizing effects of eradication. We will also support farmers in developing alternatives. Finally, we encourage the Afghan Government to disrupt the drug trade and to go after the drug lords.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): I would like, first of all, to express to you, Mr. President, and to the members of the Council, Japan's appreciation for the opportunity to present its views on the situation in Afghanistan — a subject to which Japan attaches great importance.

Let me also at the outset express our congratulations and best wishes to the Italian delegation for having taken over the lead role on Afghanistan this year from Japan. We appreciated the presence at this meeting of Mr. D'Alema, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy.

We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Tom Koenigs, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, for their informative briefings.

The Government of Japan regards as very important that the whole process — all internal, regional and international efforts that contribute to the promotion of a constitutional democracy and to the strengthening of the consolidation of peace, reconstruction and development in Afghanistan — must move forward with as little hindrance and as much support from the international community as possible. That is essential not only for bettering the lives of the Afghan people, who have suffered for too long from hardship, but also for enhancing stability in the region of South, Central and West Asia, as well as for advancing the collective efforts of the international community on counter-terrorism.

The United Nations, and especially the Security Council, plays a crucial role in this enterprise. The unwavering commitment of the international community through the Security Council was again demonstrated when the Council dispatched its mission to Afghanistan last November, on the results of which I had the honour to report in this Chamber on 7 December.

The situation in Afghanistan now stands at a crossroads, as was made amply clear in the most recent report by the Secretary-General (S/2007/152), as well as in the November Council mission report.

On the one hand, we can see many positive achievements and signs of hope, such as the successful completion of the Bonn process and the commitment by the Afghan Government and people to address a multitude of challenges and problems. The Afghanistan Compact provides the essential vehicle and framework of a strategy, and its consistent implementation is clearly of central importance. We are encouraged that one of the core values that we have emphasized — that of Afghan ownership — is being respected to a large extent in the ongoing process, as exemplified in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

On the other hand, the challenges remain enormous — in the areas of security, counter-narcotics, the rule of law, good governance and development, to name but a few. As I reported on behalf of the Security Council mission, the people and the Government of Afghanistan are expected to continue with their tireless efforts on all of those fronts, and the international community, for its part, must extend adequate support, as envisaged in the Compact, so as to meet the benchmarks established therein and not repeat the failures of the past. Japan is committed in the long term, and will continue to play an active role in this regard.

On security, which remains the most preoccupying concern, we welcome the continued efforts by all the actors involved, including the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), to contain the insurgency and the terrorist activities. We support and encourage the efforts of Afghanistan and Pakistan to improve security along and across the border, and we encou age their plan to hold cross-border jirgas aimed at confidence-building and stability. We also support the endeavours pursued under the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan.

Japan is committed to promoting — after the successful handling of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes — the next step in assisting the security sector reform, namely, the disbandment of illegal armed groups. We are concerned about the fact that, as the Secretary-General's report notes, only limited progress has been made so far on this. We take note, however, of the fact that that some tangible progress is being made — for example, in the province of Kapisa, where progress in disbanding illegal armed groups has allowed development projects to commence, and, similarly, in the province of Takhar in the north-east. The disbandment of illegal armed groups should be closely monitored, as should other efforts in security sector reform, including those relating to the police, the national army and the judicial sector.

In this connection, my delegation commends Slovakia on its initiative to hold an open debate in the Security Council on security sector reform during its presidency last month.

Narcotics-related problems have indeed become a main threat — one no less serious than the threat posed by the Taliban-led insurgency — to Afghanistan's peace and security. We fully support the view expressed in the report that an urgent, concerted effort by all stakeholders is needed to improve implementation of the National Drug Control Strategy. Japan has been assisting the efforts of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and has contributed to the Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund to assist projects promoting alternative livelihoods. We are also developing an assistance plan to eradicate drug trafficking along Afghanistan's borders with other Central Asian countries by strengthening border control, in collaboration with the United Nations and the United States.

Development is another essential element for the consolidation of peace in Afghanistan. The role of the provincial reconstruction teams is critically important for this purpose. Upon his recent visit to NATO headquarters, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe stated that Japan would strengthen its cooperation with NATO in this regard, and my Government subsequently decided to provide approximately 2 billion yen in grant aid over the coming several years for provincial reconstruction team-related civilian projects, such as the construction of schools and clinics.

On a bilateral basis, key infrastructure-building, particularly in the roads sector, has been one of the priority areas of Japan's development assistance in Afghanistan. In addition to contributing to the improvement of the ring road between Kabul and Kandahar and between Kandahar and Herat, we have been helping Afghan officials in charge of road management to strengthen their capacity in order to enhance their sense of ownership in this essential area of economic development.

In this vein, outreach to the population in the provinces is of critical importance. We note with grave concern the Secretary-General's finding about popular alienation. According to the Secretary-General's report, as well as the November Council mission report, that problem remains a key factor behind the revitalized insurgency and stems from inappropriate Government appointments, tribal nepotism, the monopolization of power, and the marginalization of those outside the dominant social and political groups. The ongoing expansion of UNAMA into the provinces is an important step to address that problem, and Japan welcomes it. It is hoped that an expanded UNAMA presence will contribute to the reconstruction and

development of the provinces and will lead to greater support among the local population for the consolidation of peace in the country. We expect that, while remaining vigilant with regard to the safety of their personnel, UNAMA's regional and provincial offices will continue to work in close cooperation with the Afghan Government and the International Security Assistance Force.

Before concluding, I wish to draw the attention of the members of the Council to a recommendation from the Security Council mission that the list prepared by the Al-Qaida and Taliban sanctions Committee be updated as necessary and on the basis of the most up-to-date information. I hope that the Council will pay due attention to that matter.

The role of UNAMA remains critically important in ensuring the consolidation of peace in Afghanistan within the key framework of the Compact. We pay high tribute to the dedication of all UNAMA staff on the ground. The delegation of Japan therefore supports the extension of UNAMA's mandate for a further 12 months and urges the Council to adopt the necessary draft resolution in a timely manner.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus.

Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO): Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

We support in principle the conclusions set out in the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2007/152). We thank Mr. Koenigs, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, and Mr. Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), for their briefings.

We note that some progress has been made in the reconstruction process in Afghanistan. Eight of the 12 benchmarks set for 2006 in the Afghanistan Compact have been met. The international community continues to take an active part in normalizing the situation in the country.

At the same time, CSTO member States are concerned about the growth of violence and terror provoked by Al-Qaida and Taliban fighters. The deterioration of the security situation not only hampers the reconstruction process in Afghanistan, but also calls into question the progress made in the political arena. In that connection, we believe it is essential to ensure full implementation of the sanctions regime imposed by the Security Council.

We remain concerned about the illicit production and trafficking of drugs out of Afghanistan. The findings of the UNODC report entitled "Afghanistan: Opium Survey 2006" show an increase in poppy cultivation and in the production and trafficking of illegal drugs.

The flow of drugs out of Afghanistan poses a serious threat to regional and global security. The CSTO believes that its mission is to halt drug trafficking by all possible means and in close cooperation with those participating in the anti-drug coalition. A concrete example of the practical anti-drug-trafficking efforts of CSTO member States is the successful implementation of an international preventive operation entitled "Channel 2006". Operation Channel has been carried out regularly since 2003 by the law enforcement agencies of CSTO member States. As a result, we have detected and suppressed activities related to heroin smuggling. Tons of illegal drugs and large amounts of firearms and ammunition have been confiscated. We have long called upon our NATO partners to take part in Operation Channel.

Aware of the importance of military and humanitarian aid provided within the framework of international assistance aimed at the reconstruction of Afghanistan, we are convinced that it is high time to give priority to the country's economic and social problems. Grave social and economic conditions are among the reasons why support for the Taliban and for Al-Qaida fighters is growing and why extremists can consolidate their positions and increase their resistance against local authorities. The situation in the Musa Qala district is a case in point.

In that context, we must focus efforts on establishing conditions favourable for economic development and job creation in the country. New economic opportunities for a better life would help to create conditions for trade and economic activities and to reduce drug production and terrorist activities.

We believe that in the post-Bonn period the United Nations should maintain its leading role in

Afghan affairs, including by coordinating the peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts of the international community within the framework of the Afghanistan Compact.

Our States are committed to promoting peace, stability and economic prosperity in Afghanistan. There are many examples of successful economic cooperation between CSTO member States and Afghanistan, including Uzbekistan's participation in rebuilding the highway between Mazar-i-Sharif and Kabul and reconstructing 11 bridges, and its transmission of electric power to Afghanistan's northern regions under favourable contract conditions. There is also the export of electric power from Tajikistan to the province of Kunduz and the resolving key issues related to ensuring active and long-term work by major Russian companies in Afghanistan.

In that connection, we believe it is essential to enhance regional cooperation, including the interaction between Afghanistan and its neighbours on a wide range of security issues, economic projects and the fight against drug trafficking. The CSTO Council of Foreign Ministers has established a working group on Afghanistan, which will put forward proposals aimed at enhancing cooperation. Our member States have submitted a number of such proposals, particularly with regard to developing transborder transport communications. We note the initiative to establish an international trans-Afghanistan transport corridor. Our States have knowledge and experience as well as economic and technological capabilities that could be effectively utilized in that regard. More specifically, we believe that the CSTO can play a significant role in the implementation of projects within the framework of the Afghanistan Compact. We are also prepared to provide a broad range of inexpensive, high-quality products necessary for the successful implementation of such projects, including by taking orders together from donor countries and international organizations.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize that the CSTO is playing a major role in ensuring security in the region. We will continue to participate constructively in the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. McNee (Canada): Canada welcomes this opportunity to address the Security Council on Afghanistan, a country very much at the forefront of Canadian minds.

We thank the Secretary-General for his frank and forthright report on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2007/152). Progress there is undeniable. Afghans have their own parliament; refugees have returned in large numbers; women are starting their own business and sending their daughters to school. Yet we cannot afford to mince words about the real and pressing challenges that continue to confront Afghanistan. Insurgency-related violence, driven in part by a tolerance for weak governance and corruption, represents a real obstacle to the development of political, social and economic rights in Afghanistan.

I would like to echo the Secretary-General's words of gratitude to his Special Representative, Tom Koenigs, and his determined and courageous staff in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I would also like to thank Mr. Koenigs and Mr. Costa for their very helpful briefings today.

The United Nations is the bedrock of the international community's engagement in Afghanistan. We look to UNAMA to guide the international community in its efforts to help Afghans rebuild their country.

Canada is committed to the emergence of a stable, secure, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan. Both Canada's development assistance — more than $1.2 billion over 10 years — and our force contribution — 2,500 troops in the south — are a testament to that commitment. Since the Secretary-General submitted his last report on Afghanistan (S/2006/727), Canada has increased its funding by up to $200 million, making Canada Afghanistan's third-largest bilateral donor. We have deployed a squadron of tanks and support personnel to southern Afghanistan.

Canada appreciates the generous contributions of our many partners in that country, and we appeal to those who can do more, to do more. There is no shortage of need in that brave country that is struggling to reconstitute itself after decades of violent conflict.

Canada welcomes UNAMA's decision to make 2007 a year of focus on the provinces. That means a year of focus on the Afghan people, for the vast majority of Afghans — at least 90 per cent — live in the cities, towns and villages outside Kabul. The Afghan Government, working with the international

community, can and must build central institutions and cultivate national policies. But we cannot lose sight of the millions who live outside of the capital.

What does focussing on the provinces mean in practice? It means that the Afghan Government and the international community, including UNAMA, must make greater efforts to extend their presence and programming into the provinces. Focussing on the provinces also means nurturing sound governance there — in provinces, districts and communities. Afghans have known tyrannical leaders, and they have experienced the oppression of gun-barrel politics. Today Afghans are seeking leaders who will provide them with security; who will foster the conditions necessary for modest prosperity; and who will acknowledge their right to determine their own destinies. From governors to provincial councils to the Afghan National Police, there must be mechanisms in place to ensure the integrity of officials, and, where leadership falters, qualified and capable Afghans must be encouraged to come forward.

In that vein, Canada hopes that the senior appointments panel — both a short-term Compact benchmark and a key element of the Action Plan on Peace, Justice and Reconciliation — will lead to better governance. Canada is working with the Afghan Government to establish a secretariat to support that panel.

Focussing on the provinces also means rolling out national-level programmes in the provinces. The international community, through its 25 provincial reconstruction teams, must work with the Afghan Government to ensure even, country-wide reconstruction and development. The National Solidarity Programme, which aims to strengthen local-level participation in the country's development process by building the capacity of community development councils, is an excellent example of programme implementation at the grassroots level. Canada is a strong supporter of that programme, and only two weeks ago we pledged up to $55 million in additional funding for it through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund.

(*spoke in French*)

For UNAMA, focussing on the provinces also means expanding the United Nations presence country-wide. We welcome UNAMA's stated intention to maintain its regional offices as well as to increase the number of its provincial offices this year, including new offices in Day Kundi and Ghor provinces. However, as the Secretary-General makes clear in his report, UNAMA's expansion requires concomitant resources. UNAMA, with the support of the international community, must ensure that its offices are adequately staffed and that its staff members have access to the security they require to venture outside the wire and effectively undertake their outreach and coordination functions.

Canada is proud to be part of a truly international effort to help the people of Afghanistan. We are among the more than 60 countries contributing to Afghanistan's development and reconstruction. We are in the good company of 36 nations, serving as part of a United Nations-authorized, NATO-led mission to stabilize the country.

In conclusion, Canada will continue to do its utmost to support the United Nations and UNAMA, which play a vital role in ensuring the success of the international community's efforts in Afghanistan.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Doraiswami (India): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to convey the regret of Ambassador Nirupam Sen, Permanent Representative of India, at being unable, at the last minute, to address this body on behalf of India.

I have the honour to read out his statement on his behalf:

> "India joins other delegations in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your outstanding stewardship of the Security Council for this month. We also thank Special Representative Koenigs and the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Mr. Costa, for their informative and lucid briefings. For India, given our historic and cultural ties with the Afghan people, today's topic is one of great importance, especially as the Security Council considers extending the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).
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> "The ongoing effort to help Afghanistan emerge from war, strife and privation remains the responsibility of the international community, in particular, the States of the region. Hence,

consolidation of the hard-won gains since the fall of the regressive Taliban regime must be a long-term strategic objective for all of us, not merely a tactical manoeuvre for the present.

"At the outset, therefore, the latest report of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan accords well with India's own assessment of the situation on the ground. However, sections of the report on the security situation make for depressing reading, not the least of which is the frequent use of the term 'insurgents'; for us, this is a euphemism that does not begin to describe extremists and terrorists of the most vicious sort.

"The report also throws Afghanistan's steady slide into violence into sharp relief. India has consistently held that one cannot negotiate with those who choose the path of terror. Three months ago, India had noted that it was not evident that efforts to find ways of negotiating peace in the more troubled provinces of Afghanistan were succeeding. Sadly, the Secretary-General's report and the increasing trend of suicide attacks by terrorists only reinforce that point. Tolerating the spiral of violence is not an option, and a strong, unified international voice condemning international terrorism is the need of the day. We must maintain a robust response to terror, while simultaneously focusing upon the most rapid possible expansion of capacity in Afghanistan to deliver effective governance, development and the dividends of peace. The reason for this prioritization is as simple as it is self-evident: development, good governance and other symbols of democracy are based primarily on peace and stability.

"It is in this context that we welcome the completion of the expansion of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the current strategy of deploying more provincial reconstruction teams, and the effort to expand the capacity and the size of the Afghan National Army and the Afghan Police. It is particularly creditable, as the report notes, that the Afghan Army is taking an active part in combat operations while it is under training, and simultaneously dealing with a situation of 'improving' logistics support, administrative institutions and so on.

"Assistance for the national budget, to enable a rapid expansion of capacity for the police and the army, remains inadequate, and this is a cause for concern. It must be part of the international community's long-term strategy to enable the Afghan State to support appropriately equipped, well-funded, pan-Afghan institutions of State that exercise the State's monopoly over the use of force. Until there is predictability and irreversibility of this process, it is unlikely that efforts to disband illegally armed groups will be taken forward meaningfully. As long as Afghan forces of law and order are not fully empowered, the nexus between drug trafficking and terror cannot be broken.

"This brings us to the question of development. Under normal circumstances, timetables for reconstruction do not need to be so tightly telescoped, and benefits can be spread as thinly and widely as possible. The situation in Afghanistan, however, requires that development follow in the wake of security, and thus, it is occasionally less than even-handed. The example of drug trafficking is particularly relevant. At one level, firm action is required against drug lords and their mercenaries, as well as those who process the raw material. But having taken such action, the effort must be to rapidly follow up by providing alternative sources of employment to farmers and other unwitting victims of the drug industry. In such circumstances, it is difficult to ensure a fully even-handed approach.

"In that context, we note that there is often a tendency among donors to seek to resolve all possible problems in the recipient country at once. This is natural, and, to an extent, understandable. However, one cannot be prescriptive in providing assistance, as this is often the surest way to alienate the recipients of our good intentions. It is our view that donors must let the Afghan Government and people draw up their own list of development priorities, and these may occasionally differ from our own. Once basics such as food, medicine, shelter and education are provided for, in an atmosphere of relative security, it is natural that the recipients of assistance will want to build upon such gains incrementally.

"We should also focus on the many achievements of Afghanistan in the past five

years as a case of the glass being half full, and not bemoan the half that remains empty. The Afghan leadership would be the first to acknowledge the existence of corruption, people's far-from-complete access to Afghan public service institutions and the judiciary, and its still-evolving political system. But there can be little doubt that — given the widespread anarchy of past decades, ongoing campaigns of terror, today's drought and the devastation of the past — whatever has been achieved thus far is nothing short of miraculous. The list of chores ahead of the Afghan State merits the widest and most sustained programme of assistance from all of us.

"That brings me to the role of regional and international assistance and the need for closer and more effective coordination between international organizations and stakeholders in Afghanistan. In that context, I commend the efficacy of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board process, which has begun to coordinate the work of an array of international actors from the region and beyond. India is ready to contribute to such an effort. In that context, it is essential to underline that, despite the myriad challenges before us in Afghanistan, the countries of the region cannot but play a larger and more direct role in reintegrating Afghanistan into the region. Indeed, lasting development in Afghanistan will eventually be based on a revival of the age-old commercial, social, cultural and political ties that made Afghanistan the crossroads of East and West Asia, South Asia and Central Asia.

"India is attempting to support precisely such a transformation. India had the honour to join Afghanistan in hosting the Second Regional Economic Cooperation Conference, in November 2006 in New Delhi, at which both Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Karzai were present. As the incoming Chair of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), we are delighted to host Afghanistan at its first SAARC summit, in early April this year in New Delhi. We believe that that will strengthen regional cooperation while also enabling SAARC to reach out to Central and West Asia. We also believe that Afghanistan's entry into SAARC will help SAARC address issues relating to transit and the free flow of goods across borders, which will lead to greater economic development for Afghanistan and the region as a whole.

"Bilaterally, India has continued to make strenuous efforts to support reconstruction in the widest possible spectrum of activities in Afghanistan. Our current commitments exceed $750 million and cover the gamut of activities — from large projects such as road construction, power transmission lines and the construction and the refurbishment of dams to more locally relevant projects such as supplying and refurbishing hospitals, schools, community organizations, cold storage plants and so on. We are also mindful of the need to support investment in capacity building, both within Afghanistan and through the provision of over 500 scholarships a year to study in India. We endeavour to ensure that our assistance is widely spread among the regions of Afghanistan.

"In conclusion, India will endeavour to assist, to the extent possible, in every activity that can buttress peace in Afghanistan. We see that as an investment in our region and as a means of assisting a fraternal people. In all our efforts aimed towards the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan, we have ensured the close involvement of the Government of Afghanistan and the welfare of its people. With that as our common goal, India reiterates its abiding commitment to support reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan."

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. We also wish to thank you for convening this meeting and to commend you for your excellent stewardship of the Council. We also wish to extend our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and valuable report (S/2007/152), and to his Special Representative, Mr. Tom Koenigs, and his colleagues in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their tireless efforts and commendable dedication to Afghanistan. We also welcome the presence of Mr. Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and

Crime. We thank him for his efforts and for his important briefing.

The Afghan people and Government have come a long way. They have successfully met all milestones set by the Bonn Agreement. They also saw the political transition through to completion, in December 2005, when they concluded the general electoral process by inaugurating the Afghan National Assembly. That body, which has now developed into a vibrant forum for debate on a range of issues, provides an increasingly powerful counterweight to the executive branch.

Led by President Karzai, and benefiting from international and regional assistance, the Afghan people, despite the enormity of the task, have also made significant progress towards the rehabilitation of the basic infrastructure that can support the long-awaited political, economic and social development of their country. Among many other promising developments, economic indicators provide grounds for optimism about the future — given that, for example, the rate of inflation continues to decline and the exchange rate has remained stable.

Despite all those promising steps and encouraging developments, various daunting challenges and hurdles remain for the Afghan people and Government to face on their way to security, stability and development. Terrorism and insurgency-related violence, coupled with a pervasive drug economy, continue to pose a formidable combination of threats, thereby putting at risk the return of the country to peace and stability. We are concerned about the recent increase in terrorist acts and insurgency-related violence, particularly in the south and in the south-eastern parts of Afghanistan. Moreover, terrorist activities and violence by the Taliban and Al-Qaida are well in excess of those recorded for previous years. The increasing number of terrorist acts and other security incidents, in particular the high number of suicide bombings — which the report has described as representing the most visible link between the insurgency and international terrorism — pose a grave threat to the political transition nationwide and put the achievement of the Bonn process in jeopardy.

As mentioned in the report, during the past year terrorists and insurgents have been emboldened by their strategic successes, rather than being disheartened by tactical failures. Therefore, in view of certain developments on the ground, it must be underlined that any action, including contacts with those responsible for insecurity and mayhem, that could be wrongly interpreted as rewarding terrorists and criminals will prove counterproductive in combating terrorism and insecurity in Afghanistan.

The Islamic Republic of Iran condemns the continued terrorist acts committed in Afghanistan and extends its full support to the efforts of the Afghan Government to improve the security situation in the country. We are concerned about the possibility of the expansion of insecurity to the rest of Afghanistan, including to the western parts of the country, which have so far remained secure. Such an event would adversely affect the return of refugees and exacerbate drug trafficking. We are of the view that, in order to respond more effectively to the surge in terrorist violence in certain parts of Afghanistan, the capability of the Afghan police and army should be enhanced. In that regard, it is imperative that members of the international community spare no effort in empowering the Afghans themselves to address their own security problems by, inter alia, intensifying efforts to improve and accelerate the training and equipping of the Afghan police and army. We have noted with satisfaction that, apart from manpower and equipment shortfalls, the Afghan National Army continues to make good progress.

As the report indicates, poppy cultivation and the drug economy continue to grow in Afghanistan. As a neighbouring country, Iran is extremely concerned about that daunting challenge. Afghanistan now accounts for 92 per cent of the total supply of opium and its derivatives, especially heroin. We share the view that trafficking in narcotics poses a grave threat to reconstruction and nation-building in Afghanistan by undermining the rule of law, fostering corruption and supporting terrorist violence.

Undoubtedly, terrorism, insecurity and drug trafficking in Afghanistan are mutually reinforcing, and terrorist groups are among the major beneficiaries of drug money. It is therefore imperative and indispensable for members of the international community, especially those who are at the receiving end, to adjust their counter-narcotics strategy accordingly. Equally important is the absolute need for the international community to assist the Afghan Government in implementing its National Drug Control Strategy.

We therefore concur with the Secretary-General that an urgent concerted effort by all stakeholders is needed to improve implementation of the National Drug Control Strategy and that tackling the drug industry in Afghanistan must be viewed as part of the overall strategy to build healthy State institutions and restore people's trust in the authority of the Government. We further believe that more concrete steps need to be taken on the part of Afghanistan, regional States and the international community to fight that menace, as the measures taken so far do not correspond to the magnitude of the challenge. The Islamic Republic of Iran, for its part, has fought a costly war against heavily-armed drug traffickers in the past decades, and stands ready to continue that fight. Undoubtedly, if Iran is to sustain its ongoing fierce fight against drug trafficking, international support and especially the cooperation of neighbouring countries are indispensable.

We concur with the Secretary-General that, given the enormous challenges that Afghanistan is facing today, that country and its international partners find themselves once again at a critical juncture in Afghanistan's transition. We also share the view that it is essential for the international community to reconfirm its commitment to Afghanistan and consolidate the accomplishments of the past six years. In that respect, the nationally owned and led Afghanistan Compact remains the best strategic framework for cooperation between the Government of Afghanistan and the international community. As a member of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board of the Afghanistan Compact, Iran stands ready to contribute to the process and to the full realization of that imitative. We also reaffirm the central role of the United Nations in Afghanistan, including its coordination of efforts to implement the Afghanistan Compact, and therefore support the Secretary-General's proposal to extend the mandate of UNAMA, as outlined in the report.

As indicated in the report, Iran is among the key economic partners of Afghanistan in the region and has expanded its economic relations with that country in recent years. We have contributed extensive financial and technical assistance to Afghanistan's infrastructure. Out of $560 million in reconstruction assistance for Afghanistan pledged by Iran at the Tokyo conference, we have thus far spent more than $270 million on mutually agreed projects in the areas of infrastructure, technical and educational services, and financial and in-kind assistance.

Also, by hosting almost 3 million Afghan refugees for about three decades, Iran has incurred huge costs in the process. The Iranian Government expects more cooperation on the part of the international community and the Afghan Government in the process of voluntary repatriation of refugees.

I wish to conclude by reiterating that our determination will remain unwavering and our resolve will continue to be firm in supporting the Afghan people and Government in their quest for peace and prosperity.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mrs. Juul (Norway): Success in Afghanistan requires the building of Afghan ownership. That must be done through strengthened and coordinated international efforts aimed at the full implementation of the Afghanistan Compact. We believe that the United Nations should play a stronger role. We welcome the expansion of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and commend Special Representative Koenigs and his team on their work. UNAMA must be further strengthened and expanded so that it can play a strong and unifying role. Norway encourages the United Nations to continue its efforts to improve relations between Afghanistan and the countries of the region.

The security situation in many parts of Afghanistan is better than it was last year, but there are signs of continued security challenges ahead. We are concerned when it comes to the protection of civilians and conditions for the delivery of humanitarian and development assistance. Close cooperation between the Afghan authorities, UNAMA and the International Security Assistance Force will be required. International forces must continue to do their utmost to avoid civilian casualties. All international efforts must be organized in a way that strengthens the Afghan Government and Afghan popular support for the international presence.

A number of countries have increased their contributions to Afghanistan. That is a positive development. Norway has increased its humanitarian and development assistance, and will contribute almost $75 million this year, but we also have to improve the

way we work together. The Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, ably and jointly chaired by the Afghan Government and UNAMA, contributes to better coordination, but coordination can be effective only if we are all ready to be coordinated. During the last Board meeting in Berlin, the Afghan authorities asked us to reduce the caveats on our assistance. In the short term, we need to focus on capacity-building through joint efforts, but the long-term answer is to transfer control to the Afghan authorities through the Afghan budget. The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund is a good vehicle for joint action, and we encourage donor countries to channel a substantial part of their funding through the Fund.

Progress on promoting the participation of women is crucial for sustainable development. The Afghan Government and the United Nations must redouble their efforts to ensure the full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

There are signs that opium production may increase further. However, it has been demonstrated that this trend is not irreversible. Opium production has been reduced in some provinces where there has been strong leadership on the part of the governor and a good dialogue with traditional leaders, supported by the international community. We need to learn from and build on those success stories.

Strengthening law and order is key to stability in the long term. We welcome the European Union's decision to establish a European Security and Defence Policy mission, and we aim to make a substantial contribution to it. The disbandment of illegal armed groups is key to the security of the population and to stability, and progress is long overdue. UNAMA has an important role to play, in particular through the disbandment of illegal armed groups and through dialogue with the Afghan authorities. Reform of the Ministry of Interior is pivotal, and we encourage the Afghan authorities to continue and redouble their efforts in that regard.

We believe that peace and justice go hand in hand. We underline the importance of the full implementation of the Action Plan on Peace, Justice and Reconciliation, in accordance with the Afghanistan Compact and the expectations of the Afghan people.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Iceland, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Hannesson (Iceland) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Iceland.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): We say in Icelandic that there is a raisin at the end of a sausage. The only good thing about this raisin is that it will be very brief.

Let me first of all thank you, Sir, for holding this debate. I apologize in being late in sending my letter. My authorities in Iceland are a little far away sometimes. We are grateful that this meeting affords us an opportunity to openly discuss the situation in Afghanistan. Afghanistan, Iceland and Sweden became the first new non-founding members of the United Nations, on 19 November 1946. Our histories have gone somewhat different ways since, but we keep an eye on our brethren both from Sweden and Afghanistan.

I would like to join previous speakers in thanking Special Representative Koenigs and Mr. Costa from the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime for their reports this morning. We fully share their assessments. Iceland, a member of the European Economic Area, aligned itself with the statement made by Ambassador Matussek on behalf of the European Union. We also align ourselves with what was just said by the Ambassador of Norway on promoting the participation of Afghan women.

A number of previous speakers have stated that we are once again at a crucial juncture in Afghanistan and that a thorough and comprehensive international approach with the Government of that country is needed. Such an approach should encompass, first, the security of the whole country and should reverse the negative trend of increased Taliban and extremist activities. Secondly, stronger countermeasures against the trafficking in and production of narcotics are urgently needed. Thirdly, corruption throughout

Afghanistan must be addressed seriously. Fourthly, legal economic activities should be strengthened, thereby increasing Government revenue. Fifthly, infrastructure in Afghanistan must be enhanced, and sixthly, the Government of Afghanistan must be able to rely on long-term international support. In that connection, Afghanistan's neighbours, UNAMA, ISAF, the European Union and others are key.

Iceland has two persons in NATO headquarters in Kabul. One is a political adviser in the Special Representative's office, focusing mainly on the country's aviation sector. The other is chief administrator in the public information office, dealing with media and internal information for Headquarters. Currently Iceland holds six positions at the Kabul airport, and as of 1 April there will be seven positions there manned by Icelanders. The staff deployed to Kabul International Airport work mainly on overseeing maintenance operations and support and the camp at Kaya. They deal with engineering, logistics, motor pool billeting and oversight of the manpower at Kaya, to name a few tasks.

Iceland is currently cooperating with NATO in looking into how the transition of the airport to Afghan authorities can be prepared by starting the training of local staff. That is part of a larger overall plan for the Kabul International Airport and requires the assistance of many international organizations such as the International Civil Aviation Organization. Iceland will closely follow the preparations for the transition and is ready to commit more people to work on that transition and even to manage it.

For the past year and a half, Iceland has operated a six-person mobile liaison and observation team in the provincial reconstruction team in Shagarkhan, under Lithuanian control. It has also deployed one development officer to the team to assist with reconstruction and development plans in the area. A decision has been taken to discontinue the mobile liaison and observation team and look to assisting in more civilian assignments and positions instead, if possible. That is currently being looked into, and information has been sought from Lithuanian officials on the positions that need to be filled within the provincial reconstruction team and could be available for Iceland.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Koenigs.

Mr. Koenigs: I have taken careful note of all the very constructive remarks made today. They will give UNAMA the necessary guidance for the next time.

I wish to make only three remarks. First, I would like to thank the Council and all its members for the continuous support for the Afghan people and the democratically elected Afghan Government. UNAMA will certainly continue to implement the mandate the Council has given us. I am very grateful that the members of the Council intend to extend the mandate for another 12 months, strengthening UNAMA's role of protecting civilians in armed conflict. Lastly, I have taken note of the many very supportive and frank remarks on the work of UNAMA and its staff. I will be happy to convey that message to our nearly 300 international and 1,200 national staff.

The President: There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I thank everybody, especially the interpreters, for having stayed with us so long. We promise next time to do it more quickly.

The meeting rose at 2.05 p.m.